

The Story of Melsetter

Everyone helps his neighbour and says to his brother: take courage.

Isaiah 41:5,6

Introduction

Melsetter village is beautifully sited in the hills facing the Chimanimani Mountains on the Eastern border of Rhodesia, about 90 miles south of Umtali the main town of Manicaland. The name was chosen by Thomas Moodie whose grandfather, the last laird of Melsetter in the Orkney Islands, came to South Africa in 1817. In 1892 when the Moodie Trek was on its way to Gazaland Thomas Moodie wrote to the British South Africa Company: "I want to suggest, for the approval of the Company, that the name of my settlement be the Melsetter Settlement."

The name is always pronounced here with the accent on the second syllable, and recently Hugh Scatter of Melsetter House, Melsetter, Orkney, Scotland, wrote that "when the late Mr. Middlemore took over the place about 1898 he established the name 'Melsetter', and since then it has been known as such although many local people still call it by the old name 'Melster' verbally but never in writing. We have been here for just over twenty years now, and intend to keep the name 'Melsetter'."



On arrival in Gazaland Moodie chose a site for his family farm which he called Waterfall, and most of the other members of his trek settled in the same area, today's Chipinga district. In 1894 the Martin Trek reached today's Melsetter district, which then became more closely settled than Chipinga and during 1895 it was decided that the administrative centre should be moved to Melsetter. The name moved too, and for many years Chipinga was called South Melsetter and Cashel was termed North Melsetter: in this book the three areas are referred to by their present names. Chipinga, named after a local chief, is roughly 40 miles south of Melsetter, and Cashel, called after Major and Mrs. Cashel who later owned Thaba Nchu, is about 40 miles north of Melsetter.

The book aims to tell the story of Melsetter itself but, as the three districts were originally administered as one, people and developments in Chipinga and Cashel appear in the early years. Their problems were similar and they were all close friends in spite of distance from one another. Until the Sabi road was completed in 1922 all Chipinga residents travelled through Melsetter on their slow journeys to and from Umtali and the outside world; and from 1908 when today's Scenic Road was built all traffic from Melsetter went through the Cashel Valley until the new main road was put through in the late 1960s.

In order to appreciate some of the difficulties it must be borne in mind that the district is

mountainous. Farm heights vary from close on 7000' to under 3 000' above sea level, and next door neighbours are sometimes 1 000' above or below each other although only three miles apart on a winding road. Oxwagons could not travel on contours and had to go straight up, over, and down the steep hills. Rivers, which in the rainy season were frequently in flood, had to be forded. Melsetter's rainfall is high: the average annual precipitation varies between 30" and 100", with the main rains in summer from October to March, but with some rain normally also every month during winter.

Past spelling of names was not consistent: as an example, the Rusitu river is variously spelt Lusitu, Rusiti, Luciti, Lucete, Lussedie; and today's officially accepted spelling is used throughout. The meanings of place names have also been checked: the Chimanimani range of mountains should correctly be called Mawenje, which means steep and precipitous; Chimanimani, meaning pincers, refers to the Gap or Gorge through the range; the word was misunderstood by early arrivals and was adopted as the name for the mountains.

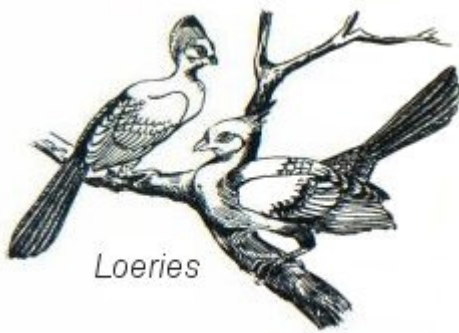
Shirley Sinclair

Albany, Melsetter

February 1968 - December 1970

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Chapter 1



There is evidence of the early inhabitants in various places. On Heathfield Estate a proclaimed National Monument consists of a large series of abstract engravings —circles, dots, lines and meanders — pecked on flat, horizontal rock surfaces, probably the work of an Iron Age people.

In Mutema Tribal Trust area are the Mutema Ruins, which appear to have been places of refuge for lowveld people from raiding Shangaan. There are several rough stone walls and a square coursed and bonded single-roomed chamber, for which carbon dates are A.D. 150 and A.D. 1230. A

17th century European firearm was found on the surface of this chamber. The site plays an important role in local traditions and tourist access is discouraged.

On Mutzarara, in caves which are basically underground watercourses widened in places, beads have been found: white bone or teeth ivory and translucent blue quartz up to ¼" in diameter and some very small copper ones, all usually associated with the slave trade and introduced from East Africa. An object like a wooden container for African medicine indicated that the cave might have been used by a witchdoctor at some time.

Artifacts, signs of early iron works, burial sites, innumerable primitive articles, and sets of rock paintings have been found.

The rock paintings in the Chimanimani Mountains, commonly attributed to the Bushmen, tell a story: they lived here, they saw elephant, buffalo, eland, reedbuck and other lesser animals; they hunted and killed these animals; they danced. Suddenly they departed; there is nothing in their rock art to show the

arrival of the Bantu as is depicted in other parts of Rhodesia, and no clue as to why they went. Certainly, following the departure of the Bushmen, perhaps causing it, came the first waves of the Bantu pressing down from the North.

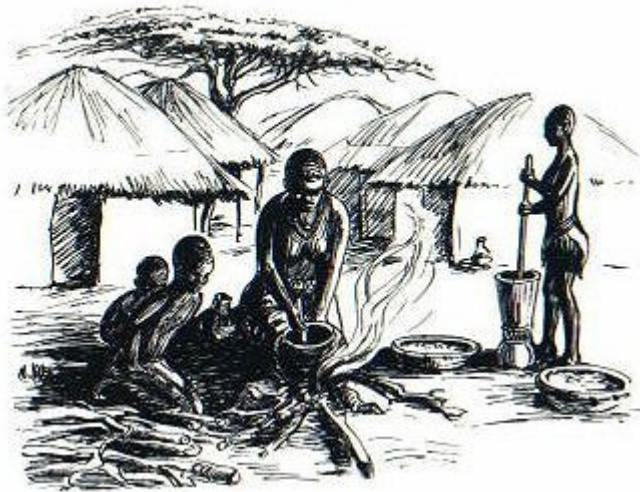


There is little evidence of any early settlement by the Bantu. The VaHode tribe reached the Rusitu valley early in the 17th century, and was probably the first of the tribes and sub-tribes which moved into today's Melsetter administrative area which stretches up to the Odzi and Sabi rivers. The others were the VaGarwe round Mutambara, the VaNyamazha of Muwushu Tribal Trust Land, the VaRombe on Sawerombi, the VaUngweme on Rocklands and through the Chimanimani Pass into Portuguese territory, and VaNyaushu of Ndima T.T.L. who were almost certainly the last to arrive and appear to have come after the first Europeans were settled here and whose main body is in Portuguese territory. All seem to have stemmed from the Rozwe tribe around Charter. Buhera and Fort Victoria. and they evolved their own

language chiNdau.

It is estimated that when the European settlers arrived the total local population was about 5000: it was certainly static and the numbers were possibly declining. Large tracts of the district, particularly the highveld, had no inhabitants. Each tribe had its own sphere of influence, which was constantly disputed both by the neighbouring tribes and by the Shangaans who raided the area frequently. The main method of livelihood was the gathering of fruit and the hunting of game, a little primitive agriculture was practised, and the population shifted from place to place in the low-lying regions. There was no real settlement and no indications of permanency.

The tribe was a group of family units led by a chief with advisers and councillors. The tribesmen's lives were controlled by the tribal and ancestral spirits: there was nothing positive the tribesmen could do on their own and all matters had to receive spiritual approval. Real leadership was vested in the supernatural: the VaDzimu, whose earthly representative and spokesman was the chief, who was assisted by the VaSwikiro. The Swikiro was the medium between the earthly people and the spirits, and the man chosen for this position through manifesting a spiritualistic medium quality had many responsibilities and rituals to perform in connection with various ceremonies. Other important people who had to be consulted were the VaNganga — the witchdoctors and the rainmakers.



All the tribes held special ceremonies to ensure good rains. In Ngorima T.T.L. the chiefs ceremony was the Masoso in October, when free beer was provided and an ox was slaughtered, there was dancing and everybody was allowed to talk freely for a day and a night. Anyone could hold other rain ceremonies after the chief had held his, and all had special rituals laid down for procedure, including items such as the behaviour of the sacrificial goat and whose duty it was to brew the beer and to carry the beer and the meat.

In times of great drought the kraal heads took offerings of spices, grain, black cloth and snuff to the chief, who entrusted them to his envoys who carried the offerings to Musikavanhu, a famous rainmaker in Chipinga District, and it is alleged that the rain invariably came as the envoys were on their way back home.

Another great ceremony was one of thanksgiving after the reaping of the harvest, and some tribes had up to nine formal ceremonies every year, with various rituals for approaching and appeasing the spirits. The causes of disasters such as famine or fire were of no interest to tribesmen, who found it important only to propitiate the spirits in order to prevent the repetition of such events.

According to tribal legend the VaHode (pronounced hôdie) or Ngorima tribe was formed by Sahode, a dissident Rozwe chief who came to settle around the Nyahode river area with a band of followers. Present-day elders retain in memory the name of every chief since Sahode.

The few people already living here were soon absorbed by the newcomers through intermarriage, and the new tribe retained many of the parent Rozwe customs, one of the most significant being that chieftainship passed only from father to eldest surviving son and about a year was allowed to elapse before a new chief was installed.

The tribal lands covered a variety of altitudes, soils and rainfall, so the cropping of cereals, beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and ~,inach was a reasonably simple matter. Wild fruits, herbs and mushrooms were abundant and honey, flying ants and caterpillars were often available. Hunting the abundant game or trapping fish or fowl supplemented a diet otherwise provided by their own domestic cattle, goats and chickens. Ironstone and a wide selection of indigenous woods were available for fashioning their implements and there was clay for making pots.

The tribe enjoyed peace and comparative prosperity until the mid-19th century when the first of the Shangaan raiding parties appeared on the scene. The chief at that time, Kufakweni, had as a young man sought adventure with the ranks of the Zulu Zwangendaba who was raiding his way through Rhodesia. Kufakweni's name was changed to 'Ngorima' following an angry remark he once made in reply to an accusation that, while he wasted time in adventuring, others were engaged in the more important task of hoeing the gardens. "Well, I am hoeing with the spear", he said. (To hoe in chiNdau is "ku-nina".)

Ngorima organised the tribe on a defensive basis with lookout posts strung along the perimeter of his country, and successfully held the raiders at bay for eight years, and on more than one occasion he fell upon a raiding party before it even set foot within his territory. He was an audacious leader and the tribesmen were proud to call themselves the Ngorima people.

About 1873 Mzila, then chief of the Gaza people, sent three powerful groups which made a combined and successful onslaught. Ngorima escaped with his nearest relatives and a loyal bodyguard after carrying out a scorched earth policy, and decided to get Lobengula's support to reinstate him, in return for which he would offer his allegiance. On his journey across country to Matabeleland he was dissuaded from this plan by Chief Gutu who offered him a place to live in today's Victoria province. He eventually died and was buried there, and later his bones were disinterred and brought back for reburial near the old Kraal site on Tilbury Estate.



Ngorima's son became chief and settled on the banks of the Rusitu river, quite happy to accept Gungunyana, who had succeeded Mzila in 1884, as paramount. The remnants of the old Hode tribe, many now with Shangaan blood in their veins, gathered round the new Ngorima and a tribal unit was again established. It was at this stage that the first Europeans arrived in the area, and the position of the chiefs Kraal influenced the siting of Ngorima Reserve. The second Ngorima moved from the new Reserve in 1912 to live near the ancestral home on Tilbury, where his son and grandson lived in turn, and this policy of living apart from the mass of their people weakened tribal cohesion for some years until the chiefs came back to live among their people in Ngorima Tribal Trust Land.

Traditional burial grounds of other local chiefs are to be seen at Mbundirenyi on Dunblane and Tsanza on Lindley North facing the mountains. The VaUngweme have used these groves of trees walled with stone.

According to the list of chiefs, the VaNvamazha came to Muwushu. Biriwiri and Nvanvadzi

about 1800. Some of the people were led by a spirit to what was later known as the farm Cyclops where they found a man, masonga, who belonged to no particular tribe, living alone off fruits, and settled near him and were called the Nyamazha, the Unknown; the story goes that these tribesmen took refuge at the top of Nyamazha hill and were all slain when Gungunyana's people raided, and the gwasha then became a sacred place which may be visited by tribesmen only with spirit approval and where special offerings are made to propitiate the spirits.

The VaNyamazha chiefs were buried on a small hill called Teterera, and it was customary for anybody wishing to cross Teterera to talk all the time or make some continual noise, or else he would see strange things and eventually die.

In 1899 Gungunyana established his headquarters at Manhlagazi, about 50 miles north of the Limpopo river and some 120 miles from its mouth at Delagoa Bay, and it was to Manhlagazi that later visits were made which were associated with the settlement of the Melsetter area.

In the meantime the Portuguese had built settlements at various places along the East Coast of Africa and had made expeditions inland. By the 17th century they had established a line of forts from Tete on the Zambezi river to Tati on the Limpopo river, and during the 18th century they declared that all the country between Mozambique and Angola was Portuguese. During the 19th century they suffered setbacks from migrating warlike Bantu, but gradually re-established themselves and formally made a treaty with Chief Mzila of Gazaland. They erected trading stations and hoisted the Portuguese flag, and in 1884 they proclaimed Manicaland as theirs, where Mtasa was recognised as chief.

In 1887 the Portuguese issued an official map of Southern Africa, marking the whole of Lobengula's territory as a Portuguese possession, but the British Government protested, and Lisbon authorities withdrew for the time being their claim to country west of the 32° East Longitude. In 1888 Paiva d'Andrada united all the gold-seekers and companies into one Companhia de Moçambique, and the position of the tribal leaders became insecure as Portuguese forces carried out raids to the west.

It was against this background that the British, and particularly Cecil John Rhodes, became interested in the country to the east of Matabeleland where advanced missionary and trading posts had been established. The British South Africa Company, referred to as the Company or the B.S.A.Co., was granted its charter for the administration of Rhodesia by the British Government in 1889.

In 1891 Rhodes met two young men, George Benjamin Dunbar Moodie aged 30 and William Matthias Longden aged 28, who were both to influence Melsetter's story.

In March 1890 Dunbar Moodie arrived by boat in Beira and travelled up the Pungwe river, and then overland to Macequece and on to the Penhalonga valley in Manicaland, where he established his camp as manager of the Sabi Ophir Gold Mining Company.



Reed Buck

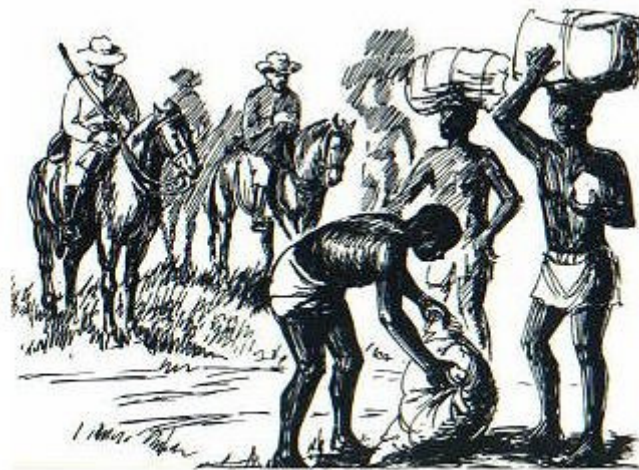
The Pioneer Corps, led by Frank Johnson, raised the Union Flag at Fort Salisbury on 12th September 1890, and with the Corps came Dr. (later Sir) Leander Starr Jameson, Rhodes' very active lieutenant who became administrator of Rhodesia in 1891.

As the Pioneer Corps neared Salisbury the Portuguese claimed sovereignty over the whole of Manicaland. Three days after the flag was hoisted the Administrator, A. R. Colquhoun, and F. C. Selous reached Chief Mtasa's Kraal on the Penhalonga Range near Moodie's camp, and Dunbar participated in the negotiations when Chief Mtasa placed himself under the protection of the B.S.A.Co., who thus gained Manicaland.

Later that month Dr. Jameson and Frank Johnson arrived at Dunbar's camp on their way to find an eastern seaport for Rhodesia, and he helped them by personally recruiting thirty carriers from nearby kraals with the liberal aid of his already legendary sjambok.

In November Dr. Jameson got back to Kimberley and convinced Rhodes of the urgency of gaining a concession from Gungunyana himself, which they hoped would open the road to the sea with trade following the opening up of the east coast route. It was felt that the Portuguese would be unlikely to establish their authority over the coastline in Shangaan territory as Gungunyana's relations with them were far from friendly.

Rhodes sent Dr. Schultz to approach Gungunyana at Manhlagazi and arranged that Dr. Jameson, who was returning to Salisbury, would assemble a party to travel overland to join him. At the end of the year Jameson left Salisbury with Denis Doyle. At Penhalonga they collected Dunbar who had by then resigned from the Sabir Ophir Company, and the three set out on horseback, with carriers, on their long trek southwards.



Three men set out with carriers

On 19th January 1891 they crossed the Umvumvumu river and, as they approached the higher ground near the Chimanimani Mountains, Dunbar was very taken with the agricultural prospects and looked at the country with a view to bringing settlers to this fertile area. There was then no plan for encouraging any settlement but Dunbar waxed enthusiastic about the possibility. Jameson thought the idea absurd, but recommended that Dunbar should talk to Rhodes.

They carried on through the lowveld and reached the Sabi river on 5th February: "No kraal, no boats, no food, damn all", recorded Dunbar, who then rode downstream and eventually found a native canoe which they used to ferry their possessions across. For another fortnight they struggled on through barren deserted lowveld, their horses and carriers completely exhausted and they themselves desperately ill with malaria. Eventually, forty-four days after leaving Penhalonga, they reached Manhlagazi.

In a camp nearby they found a missionary couple of the American Zulu Mission, who had been stationed there for three years. Their Society (today the Rhodesian Mission American Board) approached the B.S.A.Co. for land, Rhodes offered them Silinda, and the Mount Silinda Mission

was started by Wilder, Bunker and Dr. Thompson, who in 1893 were joined by others who travelled from Beira up the Buzi river and across country.

Also encamped near Manhlagazi was a party of concession-hunters from the Companhia de Moçambique on an errand similar to Dr. Jameson's. Dr. Schultz meantime had been negotiating with Gungunyana, who was very impressed with all that the British had done in Southern Africa. He distrusted the Portuguese, and decided to negotiate with the Company's representatives. Gungunyana sent Dr. Jameson a slaughter ox on 4th March and they had a short formal interview which was followed by longer discussions on succeeding days.



Dunbar Moodie

On March 9th the Gazaland Concession was signed, in terms of which Gungunyana ceded the commercial and mineral rights of all his country, extending from the Limpopo to the Zambezi and including Manicaland, to the B.S.A. Company. In return he was to receive 1 000 Martini-Henri rifles and 20000 rounds of ammunition and an annual cash subsidy to be paid in sovereigns.

Jameson was delighted at securing the treaty, but the international legality of the Concession was doubtful. The boundary dispute dragged on between Britain and Portugal for years and affected Mafeking directly both in the daily lives of its people and in the eventual effect of its settlement when most of Gungunyana's territory was adjudged to be Portuguese.

Dr. Schultz had already arranged for the arms to be delivered, and Jameson and his party, carrying the precious Concession, set off for the mouth of the Limpopo to meet the tug bringing the arms. A Portuguese gunboat was

anchored alongside the tug, and Jameson hastily handed the Concession to his carrier who had been retained to take the horses overland to Delagoa Bay, with instructions to ride as hard as he could along the coast until he came to a town.

Jameson's party was searched by the Portuguese and its members were arrested as gunrunners and held as prisoners on board the gunboat until they reached the township of Delagoa Bay. There they were released and collected the treaty from the British Consul to whom the carrier had delivered it. On payment of a fine of £2 000 the arms were later released by the Portuguese and were despatched to Gungunyana.

Dr. Jameson's party was disbanded. Dunbar Moodie embarked on a boat for Durban, from where he travelled to Bethlehem in the Orange Free State, and to his cousins there he unfolded his tale of the rich farming prospects of Gazaland.

Two of Gungunyana's trusted indunas had travelled to England to satisfy the British Government that the negotiations of the Gazaland Concession were genuine and understood by Gungunyana. Denis Doyle escorted them on the trip, and on their return later in 1891 he travelled with them on a small coaster up to Delagoa Bay.

Will Longden boarded this coaster at Port Elizabeth, planning to go as far as Durban only, but on board he met Rhodes and all his plans were changed. In conversation Longden mentioned that he had been across the Limpopo into Gazaland. Rhodes was immediately interested, and, after some searching questions, asked Longden if he would go with Doyle to Gungunyana and would stay on at Manhiagazi indefinitely as his representative, keeping the king sweet and counteracting the machinations of others.



Will Longden in his twenties

Longden agreed for the love of adventure, and said later that he gave up an appointment worth £600 per annum to enter the Company's service at £480. At Durban the party was joined by Harrison, a trooper of the newly formed British South Africa Police.

They disembarked at Delagoa Bay and made their way over difficult and little-known country, parts of which were occupied by hostile tribes, and in mid-October 1891 they reached the outskirts of Gungunyana's Kraal. In due course he received them and listened with interest to the indunas' graphic tales of all they had seen on their travels to London.

While the deputation was at Manhiagazi some Portuguese officials arrived to try to negotiate their own settlement with Gungunyana, but he had decided to abide by his concession to the B.S.A. Co., and turned them away. He continued, however, to argue interminably over details of the Concession with the Company's representatives, and it took some time before the negotiations were completed.

He took a great fancy to their horses, and the three white men felt that they had no alternative but to hand them over to him. When the time came for them to set off on the long journey back to Delagoa Bay Doyle was seriously ill with blackwater fever and had to be carried by relays of bearers while Longden and Harrison walked.

At Delagoa Bay Doyle was placed on board ship, and Longden met him casually once again some years later.

Longden got another horse and returned to Manhiagazi, where he remained, the only white man, for eight months. In the middle of 1892 he received a message by runner with orders from Rhodes for him to return. He learned later that the presence of a B.S.A. Company representative at Gungunyana's kraal was an irritation to the Portuguese, and the British Government, wishing to maintain cordial relations with the Portuguese Government, brought pressure to bear and instructed Rhodes to recall Longden.

When Longden left Gungunyana presented him with a piccanin, a great embarrassment to the young bachelor, but he was unable to refuse this gift of a small black child, whom he called Mani and whom he took back to Port Elizabeth for his mother to bring up.

After this visit to Port Elizabeth Longden continued to work for the Company, travelling extensively and adventurously on special missions for Rhodes, until in 1895, when he was Magistrate at Tuli, Dr. Jameson instructed him to go to Maseru.

Chapter 2



Thomas Moodie

Melsetter owes its existence to the Treks to Gazaland, which have been fully described in other books: the Moodie Trek was of direct interest, and the Martin Trek was the main one to Melsetter. In following the early journeys I have given all the farms their more familiar modern names.

At the end of March 1891, after visiting Gungunyana with Dr. Jameson, Dunbar Moodie arrived at the farm of his cousin Thomas Moodie at Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. Thomas and Dunbar were very close to one another in spite of Thomas's 20 years' seniority, and between his travels Dunbar had spent much time as a member of Thomas's household.

Farming had not prospered for Thomas, and, as he also had a large family, the possibility of trekking to a fresh environment where there would be enough land to settle all his sons made him keenly interested when Dunbar arrived full of enthusiasm for prospects in Gazaland, which he described as the loveliest country he had ever seen, this gem of the north, this Promised Land, and they persuaded neighbours also to consider the move.

Dunbar set off for Cape Town in April 1891 and outlined his colonising plan to Rhodes, who immediately appreciated what a tremendous advantage it would be to have a European settlement in Gungunyana's country as it would help with the Portuguese problem and be of benefit to the the Company's trans-Limpopo venture as a whole.

Dunbar returned to report favourably to Thomas, and carried on via Beira to make arrangements with the Administrator in Salisbury. There he again met Rhodes, who had travelled overland, and after the interviews Dunbar wrote to the Company's secretary in Cape Town that Rhodes had approved of the scheme to bring a hundred farmers into the country and wished to have their names.

Dunbar took back to Bethlehem a copy of the Company's Mashonaland Settlement Scheme, of which two provisions directly affected the Gazaland settlers. One was that farms were to be of 1 500 morgen, with an annual rental of £3; this was considered too small, and was later increased to 3000 morgen (approximately 6,333 acres) at an annual quitrent of £6. The other was the stipulation of beneficial occupation of the land within five months of the grant by the owner or a European manager approved by the Company. This clause was difficult to fulfil when things became really tough later and farmers wanted to try to earn some money away from their farms.

Those planning to trek held meetings in the Orange Free State and elected Thomas Moodie to be their leader. For various reasons some of those who originally expressed their intention of joining the trek were unable to do so, and as many of these were men of ability and influence Thomas feared that the Trek might not be the success he had expected.



Half Tented Wagon

Drawn by Anna W Light

All preparations were made for those who were determined on the journey, and on 5th May 1892 a caravan of 16 wagons left Bethlehem on the long trek to the north. Dunbar did not accompany them: he went via Beira and Umtali to Salisbury, and expected to join up with them well inside Rhodesia shortly after his arrival there in August. He had great difficulty, however, in locating them, and it was two weeks later, after he had ridden 450 miles, that he found them barely out of Bechuanaland.

Four months had confidently been allowed for the Moodie Trek to travel from Bethlehem to Gazaland. but such were the hazards and hardships of the trek that it took them four months to reach the Rhodesian border only, and another four months of weary trekking before they crossed the Sabi river. By the time the Trek reached Fort Victoria there was dissension about leadership, their ultimate destination, and various other matters, and so the party split up and the majority took up land between Fort Victoria and Salisbury.

Seven wagons only, with fourteen men, four women and three children, left Fort Victoria to travel to their goal in the east. Their journey was full of incident and hardship: a road had to be found and negotiated, the Sabi river had to be crossed, the Driespanberg (up whose steep slopes it was necessary to use three spans of oxen for each wagon) had to be surmounted, there was a threat of tsetse fly, and nearly all members of the party were ill with malaria.

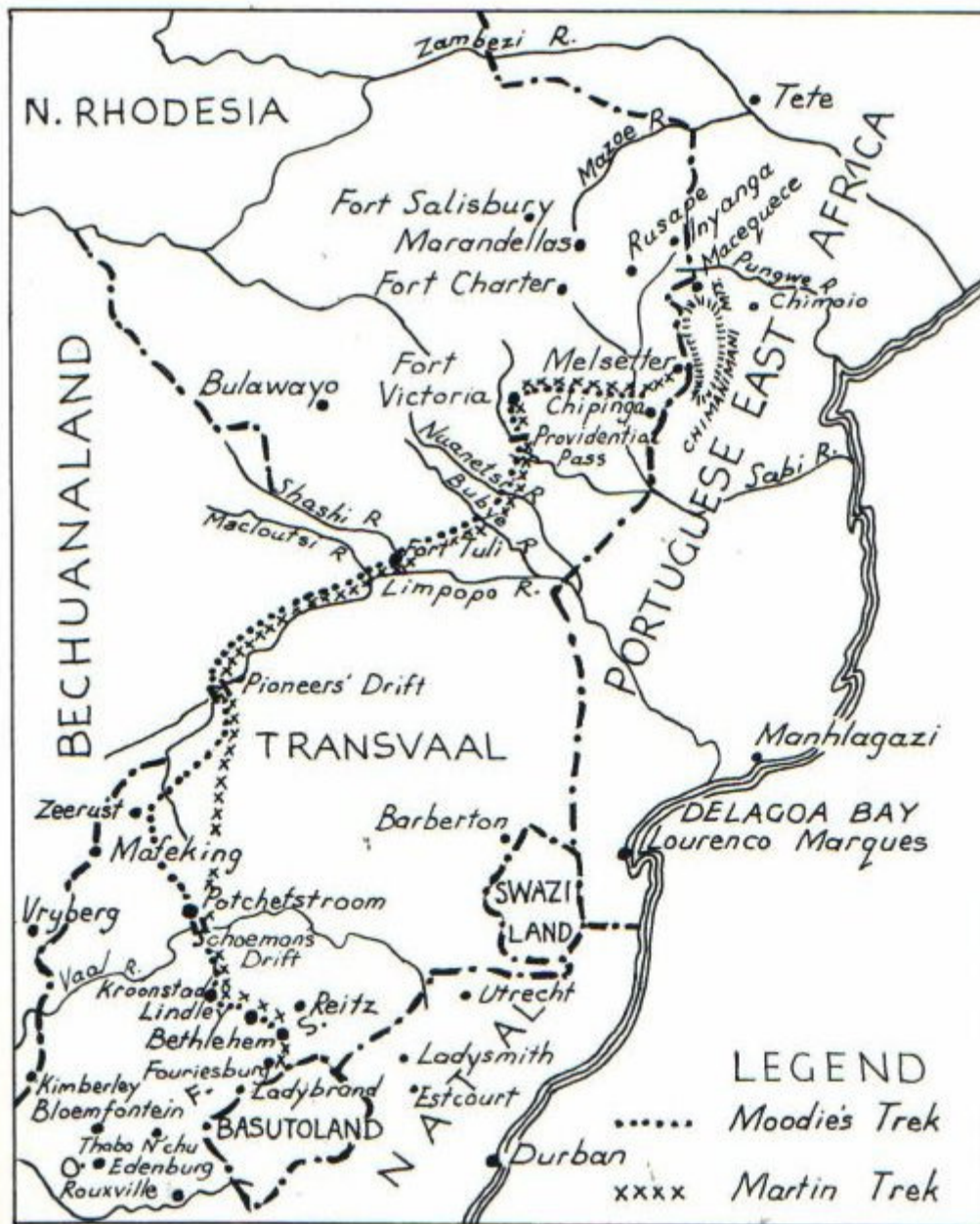
They overcame all the difficulties, and the trek ended when they reached Waterfall on 4th January 1893, where Thomas Moodie settled with his family. Ernst du Plessis, the dependable second-in-command of the trek, chose Clearwater for his farm, where his son and grandsons still live today, Dunbar established himself with his wife Sarah on Kenilworth, and others also settled around the Chipinga area.

The presence of the missionaries at the already-established Mount Silinda Mission was a great help. Dr. Thompson's medical services were soon called upon as many homes were built on low-lying ground and the toll of malaria was great.

His selfless service to the community was deeply appreciated by all.

The trekkers' arrival was followed by a sad tale of hardship, struggles and deaths, and it was particularly sad for all that Thomas Moodie, their wise, courageous and strong leader, died before the end of that first year, and was buried on Waterfall.

While the Moodie party was installing itself, an advertisement in The Friend of Bloemfontein in January 1893 offered land near Macequece in Mozambique to Free State farmers. Marthinus Jacobus Martin was then a member of the Orange Free State Parliament and a prosperous farmer. After he had discussed the advertisement with friends he wrote to make further enquiries about the farms offered. In April, when he had received replies, a meeting in Bethlehem discussed the possibility of moving up to this well-described land, and decided to send a commission to study the land and conditions.



SOUTH-CENTRAL AFRICA

In August four farmers, including Martin, left Durban by boat, and at Beira they were welcomed by the Governor of Mozambique and given permission to visit Gazaland. They were supplied with guides, and travelled from Beira along the Pungwe river to Fontesville and then overland to Chimoio (today's Vila Pery) and Macequece. They considered the ground in that area was too low-lying, so they went further south searching for highveld farms, and when they reached Clifton they saw the type of country for which they were looking.

They learned from local inhabitants of a European settlement a few days' journey away, and made their way to Waterfall, where they were given a great reception by the Moodies.

Dunbar, as the Company representative, took them round on a visit of inspection. They rode over towards the Nyahode river and the Chimanimani Mountains, and travelled across Lemon Kop and Cecilton, and all decided that this was the area in which they would like to settle. After ten days' riding Marthinus Martin had chosen his farm Rocklands, and they all planned to apply to the Company for permission to settle along this range of mountains, and not to follow up their original intention of settling in Mozambique. In the event Martin was the only one of the four explorers who carried on with the plan.

Two months later, travelling via Beira, they arrived back in the Free State. Martin was enthusiastic about what they had seen, and arrangements could not have been in better hands. He made full enquiries from the B.S.A Co. and from Mozambique officials about the exact position regarding Gazaland, and from Beira was assured that the territory was British.

The B.S.A. Co. said that he could have the eight farms for which he applied if he left the following April to occupy them, as it was an attractive place and other people might be interested. Martin went to Kimberley to interview Rhodes, who encouraged this proposed agricultural trek as he was very keen on settlement by family units, and trusted that Martin's people would be successful and turn out the Company's strongest supporters on the Eastern Border.

To the distress of his constituents, as he had worked untiringly in the interests of the Free State people, Martin resigned as a member of the Volksraad. He showed great thoroughness in preparations for the trek, including getting in touch with the Rev. Andrew Murray, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, to ask him to assist in starting a proper congregation in the north.

His party gradually grew to over a hundred, and he applied successfully to the B.S.A. Co. for more land for the extra families.

On 10th April 1894 the Martin Trek of 24 wagons and 104 members moved slowly out of Fouriesburg. By arrangement they were joined by other families en route. President Kruger granted them permission to travel through the Transvaal, which made the first part of their journey shorter than the Moodies' had been.

The trekkers travelled with good strong selected oxwagons, and brought clothing, materials, medicines and food which included boer-meal, rice, raisins and other dried fruits, coffee beans, sugar, suet, etc. The first part of the journey went very well while food lasted and oxen were strong, but in the latter part provisions were short, oxen and horses died, people got ill, and two members of the party died.

Each family wagon was like living in one's own home, and all had their individual prayers except on Sundays or other arranged occasions when everyone gathered together. There was never any travelling on Sundays.

Everyone had his or her work to do. Mothers had to make bread, cook food, mend clothes, do the washing, see that the children were clean, and at times had to gather wood or help where a hand was needed. Fathers had to drive and grease the wagons, keep the brakes and other gear in repair, and hunt for the pot. Boys of seven years and older had to herd the oxen when outspanned, be voorlopers leading the oxen when travelling, or drive the loose cattle following the wagons. Girls had to be mother's help, and act as nursemaid — some of the babies were under one year old.

At times of danger great piles of wood were made round the laager for fires at night to keep lions away from the cattle. The Martin trek was accompanied by four Zulu and four Hottentot men and two Hottentot women servants: they repaired the trek gear and helped generally.

Men had wide-brimmed hats, trousers very narrow round the leg, and no belts unless it was a bandolier full of cartridges.



Marthinus Martin

They wore braces, sometimes made of leather, and everyone wore waistcoats with four small pockets: their jackets were seldom used.

Boys wore shirts and three-quarter trousers which came below the knee, held up by cross braces, and made of dark brown cotton velvet cord or buckskin cloth which, when aged, washed nearly white. Footwear was made of hides or skins tanned with the bark of a tree and sewn with riempies (leather thongs) or pegged with shoepegs. When their felt hats wore out, the women had to make hats from any material: perhaps from an old pair of trousers which had worn out in parts.

After arrival in Gazaland hats were made of lala palm plaited and sewn together: boys had narrow brims, girls wide brims, but the kappie was more popular for girls and women. Girls dressed in coloured prints or gingham. All, or almost all, had Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes hidden at the bottom of a tin trunk.

The trekkers brought caustic soda, so if an animal died in good condition the fat was rendered down and large bars of white soap were made. Some had moulds for casting candles and water candles were also made by a long process: fat was melted in a bowl of boiling water, and all the wicks, on a thin rod, were dipped into the fat, put out to cool, then dipped again, and this was repeated until the candles were thick enough.



Ebenhaezer

When the Trek arrived at Buffelsdrift it was decided to erect a memorial of stones in memory of their safe arrival on the Gazaland border and as a sign of their thankfulness for God's faithful guidance and care on the long, dangerous and exhausting journey. On the 16th October they celebrated the day of Thanksgiving, and the spot and memorial were called 'Ebenhaezer', from I Samuel, 7.12: "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it..., and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, hitherto hath the Lord Helped us." The members of the party decided that once every five years they would gather there on the 16th October and celebrate the day.

The Martin trek reached Waterfall on 17th October, where they learned that Thomas Moodie had recently died. They spent a few days with Mrs. Moodie, then most of them carried on towards the Chimanimani area which Marthinus Martin had chosen the previous year on his exploratory trip.

A big problem was how to get the wagons to their destination. The big mountains north of Sterkstroom and the Rusitu river rose as if they were out to prevent even the bravest and

most dauntless trekker from proceeding one step further, but they were determined to reach the chosen goal. Reconnaissance parties found a way, and so they carried on slowly, down the Rusitu valley and up to the top of Uitkyk, where Mrs. Scholtz, who was respected by all and whose death was a severe loss, was buried.

They travelled down to Albany, through the Nyahode river at Bloemhof, and up over towards Orange Grove. Here there was a hitch when a police officer, Joe Nesbitt, suddenly made his appearance with a letter from Dunbar Moodie commandeering all the men to come with their rifles and ammunition and provisions for eight days to withstand a Portuguese army which planned to take over Gazaland. All the men except Martin, Olwage and Heyns went off to Kenilworth in pouring rain. After eight days they arrived back at the Trek, wet, hungry and tired, and without having had the privilege of meeting with the Portuguese.

On 3rd November the Trek arrived at Lindley, and after a few days there each said farewell to his fellow-trekkers to settle on the farm of his choice. The whole party was deeply grateful to Marthinus Martin for the way he had led them and had shouldered the responsibility.

The Martin Trekkers were unfortunate, as the Moodies had also been the previous year, that the trek had taken very much longer than had been anticipated. Arriving in November meant that they were late for planting food crops, and November and December that year were very wet. However, they ploughed as much ground as they could, planted all the seeds they had brought with them, and were encouraged at the satisfactory rate of growth of the maize and vegetables.

Martin hoped others would move to this area, which had a plentiful supply of water, an ideal climate, wood in abundance, and grass admirably suited for cattle and sheep and probably for horses; he said that he was completely satisfied, although a pioneer's life was no easy one.

They had little contact with the outside world, but their health was good, and they settled down with determination. They were firm, stout-hearted, deeply religious people, ready to stick out the initial hardships in order to make settled happy homes in this wonderful country.

Their first buildings, which had to do duty for years, were huts in the native style: a circle of poles planted close together and plastered with mud inside and out, with a thatched conical roof. These rondavels, or pole-and-dagga huts, were used for dwellings and administrative offices.

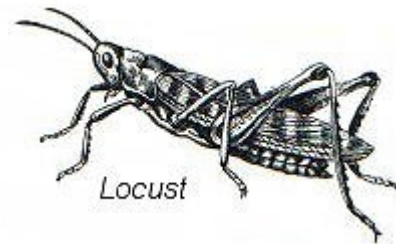
Those who have experienced some of Melssetter's heavy rainy seasons can dimly appreciate what the conditions must have been like: living in their wagons, which were surely by then not as weatherproof as when they set out from the dry Free State; huts being slowly built in the rain; no fireplaces for drying those eternally wet clothes; all leatherware and many other articles covered with green mould; cooking out of doors whatever the weather; looking after the small children, while the older ones worked outdoors; doing the ploughing and planting themselves with little or no outside help.



1895 got off to a bright start with crops and cattle showing promise, but very soon the farmers suffered their first serious set-back when locust invasions destroyed almost everything. Swarms travelled day after day among the hills, and the children spent from sunrise to sunset chasing them: going round a little patch of mealies or vegetables with flags and

tins, shouting, and trying to kill them with stones or sticks. They enjoyed it occasionally but most of the time the task was too much for them.

By April few families had any flour left and their vegetable supplies were meagre; they eked out what they had with pumpkins and mealies in place of bread and honey instead of sugar. Their staple diet was rapoko (a small grain) meal bartered from local tribesmen for such clothes and material as could be spared. Sewing needles were very precious, and replacing their own clothing was a serious problem and they had to start using tent canvas as a source of cloth.



Fortunately buck were plentiful, so they could get meat and hides, but ammunition was short and had to be used sparingly: youngsters soon learned to get a buck with each shot, as they were not allowed to waste a single round.

The railway line from Beira towards Umtali had by then reached Chimoio, from where supplies were obtained by carriers. From the outset Dunbar Moodie pressed for the Company to build the Umtali-Melsetter wagon road. He stressed that it was a matter of great importance as the settlers needed roads to travel on.

In January 1895 Mansergh, the surveyor in charge of the Beira railway, surveyed and started laying a road between Umtali and Melsetter, and by June wagons could get through although the journey took many weeks, and for a few years transport was also carried on the less mountainous but less healthy route through the Chimanimani Gorge to railhead at Chimoio.

The district was administered from the B.S.A. Company headquarters on Dunbar Moodie's farm Kenilworth, where pole-and-dagga huts were the Government offices and a police force of thirteen was stationed. From 1893 Dunbar was what he himself termed Pooh Bah: Native Commissioner, Justice of the Peace, Magistrate and Administrator of Gazaland.

He was also Postal agent, and each quarter a relay of runners carried despatches and post; the runners could reach Umtali in three days in favourable weather, but with the erratic service letters from Salisbury were often answered from Kenilworth many weeks later.

In 1895 administrative changes were decided on, Dunbar was relieved of his official appointments, and 1. P. Heugh was appointed Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate.

He was welcomed in the following terms from Rocklands:

"We the undersigned residents and burghers of Melsetter District of Gazaland tender you a hearty welcome to your new sphere of duty.

"We are a small community struggling through drawbacks and disadvantages in existence and feel the need of such a man as report speaks of you. Your name is well known to all, in your official capacity as a man of just and impartial views, socially a gentleman. Any assistance we may be able to give you officially or in a social capacity to further the interests of the country and the community, we shall give with a ready will, and heartily co-operate with you in furthering the interests and benefitting this the land of our adoption. We hope in the near future to meet you and prove for ourselves the good recommendation report has given you.

"Wishing you, your wife and family health and prosperity and that your stay amongst us may prove beneficial to you and the inhabitants of Gazaland,

We Remain, Dear Sir, Yours faithfully

It was signed by M. 1. Martin and 19 other signatories.

Heugh took up his duties at Kenilworth, where he was assisted by a clerk, and from the outset he and Dunbar were at loggerheads. He asked for an inspector of farms as he found that the confusion through Moodie's maladministration was so great that it was difficult to apportion out the country according to recognised rules. Moodie rendered no assistance, and people were flocking into the country quite in numbers. Under the Certificate of Right 3,000 morgen could be allotted, but in many instances double and treble that had been taken, and wherever one went it was said that the ground belonged to some Moodie or other.

Heugh investigated the allegation that Moodie had in several instances received considerable sums of money for selling ground belonging to the Company, as he felt that the man was quite capable of selling the whole country. He urged the appointment of an inspector as the last confusion would be greater than the first if this were not done, and suggested a salary of £1 per day with the necessary means of locomotion, say two horses.

Dunbar had by then had 4000 morgen surveyed in excess of his grant of 27 000 morgen and instructed J. M. Orpen, who was working on the district survey, to survey a further block for him. He had also charged high fees for checking beacons for settlers and some farmers had to leave as they were unable to meet these unreasonable demands.

In August Heugh reported the utmost difficulty in taking over from Dunbar: he was obliged to use force in obtaining from him what Government property he possessed, and was afraid it would be hopeless to try to get details of his transactions.

During 1895 Martin reminded the Rev. Andrew Murray of his earlier request that the Gazaland settlers should have a Dutch Reformed Church Minister, and in response to the Synod's call the Rev. P. A. Strasheim travelled to Rhodesia, formally constituted the Melsetter Congregation on 12th October, and promised that a Minister would be sent. A few months later the Rev. P. L. le Roux arrived to take on the spiritual and educational care of the residents of the scattered parish of Chipinga, Melsetter and Cashel: occasionally he also had to visit parishioners at Inyanga.



For the next eight years he worked untiringly on behalf of the community, on whom he had a profound influence. The centre of the settlement gradually became definitely the Chimanimani area, closely filled by the Martin Trek, and the feeling grew that the township should be established there. The original idea was to move the township only, but somehow the name came with the move, and the townlands to the south, which had been pegged out but not developed, became Chipinga.

The few Moodie trekkers who were still there disliked the fact that the name

Melsetter was being taken from them, but they were outnumbered and their spokesman, Dunbar, had quarrelled with the magistrate. After consideration of various sites on Rocklands, Cecilton and Fairfield, G. F. Heyns' farm Dunbarton was chosen, and J. F. Markham was employed to build the necessary huts.

On 3rd or 5th September 1895 (the exact date is indecipherable in the original letter) Heugh wrote that he had concluded negotiations with Heyns for the transfer of Dunbarton to the Government, in lieu of which he was to receive the farm Fairfield on the Nyahode river. Some difficulty was experienced because in April, when the idea was mooted of placing a township in that vicinity, Dunbar Moodie immediately beaoned off these farms for his own benefit and appropriated the ground without having any legal right to it and said that he would question anyone's right to interfere with his distribution.

A few days later the Administrator removed Heugh from his post as his administration had not been satisfactory: he had had no training to fit him for the responsibilities, besides his quarrel with Dunbar there was friction with other farmers who petitioned for his removal, and he was reported to have carried on in a way which was a disgrace to the service. Following Heugh's sudden departure Inspector R. C. Nesbitt took over as Acting C.C. and R.M. A glimpse of administration is caught in a requisition from Inspector Nesbitt, presumably in his Police capacity, for two cats of nine tails, which he hoped would be forwarded by return of mail.



Dissotis

Melsetter was nearly drawn into international affairs when Paul Kruger tried to persuade the Portuguese Government to arrest Rhodes on his arrival in Beira and to take him to Melsetter

where the Transvaal authorities would be ready to take charge of him, but the Portuguese authorities would have nothing to do with the scheme.



The first eighteen months had been one long struggle, with little food, no cash, difficulties of marketing any saleable surplus, and all capital locked up mainly in cattle, but at the beginning of 1896 prospects were good and the outlook was bright. Against the background of hopes and difficulties two events started during the year which set back

the smooth development: Rinderpest and the fears of a native rising.

The beneficial occupation clause was difficult to fulfil while farms were not producing a livelihood, and many farmers left their wives to carry on farming operations while they undertook the long trek away from Melssetter with their wagons and oxen to earn money in transport work. The result was that the devastating scourge of Rinderpest hit them very hard indeed.

The disease crossed the Zambezi into Rhodesia in February 1896; the spread was rapid with infection carried by game, and the whole country was swiftly affected. Little was known about prevention or cure of the disease, and many Melssetter farmers lost so many cattle that they were forced to give in and move away, abandoning any progress they had been able to make on their farms. Such oxen as survived were at a premium, and transport charges soared, which was another hazard for those who remained in a district so dependent on ox transport. Food was very short, and Government supplies of rice, bully beef, tea and other necessities were sent up by donkey wagon and were rationed out each week in the township. In June the Farmers' Association expressed its thanks for what had been done to alleviate the position.

In July Henry Sawerthal, in charge of Company transport between Beira and Salisbury, sent out an official notice commandeering all trek oxen belonging to farmers in the Melssetter district for the transport of food supplies from Chimoio to Salisbury. All the farmers whose cattle were purchased considered themselves very well paid, except Dunbar Moodie, who waited for three months and then complained that he had not received enough money for his

In order to get supplies to Melssetter some highly impracticable proposals were suggested from Salisbury. One was that oxwagons should leave from Gazaland in order to return with food, and Sawerthal commented that such a modus operandi would devastate the district by rinderpest. Then it was suggested that wagons should come from Fort Victoria to the western bank of the Sabi, from where supplies would be carried across the river and taken to Melssetter either by carriers or by wagons sent down to the east bank.

Efforts were made to get donkeys or mules to replace oxen, but these were at a premium. Carriers were sent from Melssetter to load up with requirements at Chimoio, where there were plenty of provisions.

In May Dunbar wrote that farmers near him were uneasy about the Matabele disturbance, and he felt that something should be done to allay any fears, although he did not think that any public demonstration would be wise as the natives were quiet but might rebel if there were signs of fear or misgivings on the part of the settlers.

The F.A. June meeting resolved that if farmers heard or saw anything definite to excite suspicions relative to the rising of natives they should report at once to Longden, and asked that spies

should be placed on the district border as a precaution against a rising, and recommended that Melsetter township be the site for a laager in case it became necessary to form one.

Anxiety mounted among the scattered farming populace, and Steyn and others from Cashel moved into larger at Elandspruit on Rocklands. This took Martin by surprise: Steyn said that they had been advised to gather in one spot as danger was near and a rising feared, but when Longden reassured him he said that they would be happy to return to their homes.



Longden was supplied with 50 rifles and 25 000 rounds, and a volunteer Burgher force was organised and troops were stationed in Umtali, from where the Postmaster kept Longden informed of news from other parts of the country. Martin was worried about reports about the war: losses in the Matopo Hills, murders in Mazoe, rising in Fort Victoria; and he asked Longden whether it would not be advisable, if they were true, that all available forces should be concentrated.

On Westward Ho! Markham built an underground tunnel as an escape route from his house.

A public meeting in August discussed the position. Twenty-five attended, Longden was the Chairman, and J. T. English reported that the Chairman most ably put forward his ideas and asked the settlers to express their views and to decide whether they would take precautionary measures to ensure their safety. A proposal by Cashel farmers, that outlying farmers should concentrate and form camps, was carried by a majority of 15 votes; and an amendment by Melsetter farmers was defeated, that no steps be taken and farmers remain as they were.

Sawerthal wrote to Longden, wondering who had alarmed the Melsetter people, and Umtali Postmaster said that there had been disquieting rumours about the Melsetter people being forced to go into laager.

There is no evidence that Melsetter went into laager in 1896, but the anxiety carried on and flared up again in 1897, and after a residents' meeting in August Claude Orpen told Longden that he had been unanimously elected Commandant of the central laager, and arrangements were made for the camp to be formed. Longden made a fort, six or eight feet high, with 200-lb mealie bags filled with sand and piled on top of another, with no cover on top; the children enjoyed having their playhouse during the day on these sandbags.

Chipinga farmers could not travel to Melsetter as they had no span of oxen which could bring a load, and Gifford wrote that they would try to get together at Wolverhampton.

The Umtali C.C. sent a Police Officer with twenty mounted men who escorted nine Melsetter people, of whom four were on Company horses which on arrival were to be given to the police. In order to send the reinforcements he had reduced the Umtali police to four, with no horses, and felt that he could not safely reduce the strength further as if Melsetter natives rebelled the Umtali ones would be very doubtful. He asked Longden to send a full report with details of what supplies were most urgently needed, and promised to send a pagamesa train (carriers with loads on their heads) with the requirements, but said that an escort would be difficult to arrange for the wagons

which were ready loaded to travel as the journey would take ten days and nobody knew if it were safe to use the road.

There was no further cause for alarm, and after being in laager for two or three weeks people dispersed to their homes. Longden was thanked for his reports; the Acting Administrator expressed his satisfaction that the prompt measures taken were successful in averting trouble; and Melsetter residents wrote to Longden expressing their thanks and appreciation for all that he had done.

An interesting side light on these times of tension occurred when Henry du Bourg Bancroft Espeut, a Moodie Trekker and the first owner of Albany (Whose name is incorrectly spelt Ashpute in many records and on the Pioneer Memorial) left Chimoio with twelve carriers, some dynamite and tools, and seven sick Company mules which it was hoped would regain strength on the excellent Melsetter grass. He travelled with a Melsetter policeman, Kleinboy Faan, who was accompanying bearers bringing supplies.

Espeut was carried through the first rivers by boys, but when they reached the Chimanimani Gorge he walked through the Msapa river with his boots and socks on, and did not take them off until after dark. After supper he called the policeman and said that he had a stomachache and had been poisoned by the bully-beef he had eaten. He was very ill that night and the next day, and in the evening Grotwahl, a local farmer, arrived at the camp and saw him shortly before he died.

Grotwahl examined the remaining bullybeef in the tin and found it quite fresh. Sergeant W. F. Moss of the Melsetter Mounted Police was sent out and Espeut was buried on Rocklands. At the inquest Longden found that the Court was of opinion that death was from natural causes: although Espeut had thought he had been poisoned by the tin of beef, nothing confirmed that supposition, and the evidence led to the conclusion that death was caused by an acute attack of colic probably brought on by wet feet.

Chapter 4



Although there had been times when Dunbar Moodie was helpful and had behaved as a reputable citizen, his general behaviour left much to be desired and many complaints were made about him.

Dissatisfaction with Moodie's handling of land led the Surveyor-General to say that no land transactions were to go through him. People who had been granted farms were allowed to peg out their own land and send a sketch upon which provisional title would be issued, and the final survey had to be done by a duly admitted surveyor and all correspondence conducted through the R.M.'s office.

Dunbar was incensed when Longden docked his ground to the original grant of 27 000 morgen. There were reports of his sawing timber on Crown lands, and he was convicted of trading gunpowder to natives for mealies, mealiemeal and other produce.

On one occasion when he was summonsed on a charge of assault. he asked if in view of the

disturbed state of the country the case could be postponed, as he felt that it was not safe to leave a family totally unprotected and many difficulties rendered absence from home almost impossible. The case was heard some weeks later, and Dunbar was found guilty and fined £10 or three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

On another occasion Moodie was fined for his behaviour towards Meredith, and then tried to circulate false and malicious rumours about him, Meredith reported the matter to the Chief Native Commissioner, who asked Longden for comment, adding that "I have great faith in Meredith and trust that with your assistance he will put Moodie to the right-about. Two Almightyies are unheard of, and I feel sure that the Spiritual will not brook the interference of the Bodily in Melsetter."

In spite of his faults, Dunbar Moodie must be recognised as a man of vision, as it was entirely due to his original efforts that the first settlement of Melsetter took place. Early in 1897 he died of malaria.

In January 1897 the boundary was finally settled along the Vigliani Line. Some farms fell into Portuguese territory and it took time for everyone to know just where the boundary was. Mrs. Sarah Moodie wrote to Longden in April: "Kindly let me know if you have received the death notice of my poor husband, and what I am to do next. My health is failing, and I am extremely anxious to have matters settled. Re Portuguese boundary, please tell me may I continue completing my house? We hear conflicting reports to the effect that we have fallen in their territory. I am all alone, forsaken by God and Man." Kenilworth is actually well within Rhodesia.

After Orpen's initial surveys, the Rhodesian surveyors who were mainly involved in the very difficult survey between Rhodesia and Mozambique were R. S. T. Fairbridge Fairbridge and A. E. Wayland. The survey necessitated long treks through mountainous broken country and all along the top of the Chimanimani Mountains, with the high Point 71 at 8 000 feet above sea level.

All who met Fairbridge remember him as a very colourful character. He had led a difficult life doing surveys in many lonely stretches of Africa, and this resulted in some eccentricities. He came to Rocklands in a donkey wagon, wearing a red sash round his waist which was his towel: he told Marthinus Martin (grandson of the leader of the Martin Trek) that only lazy men bathed and that a man who worked and sweated should rub himself down. He was very well-read: when Marthinus said he was planting Burbank wheat, Fairbridge was immediately able to tell him the whole story of that variety.

L. M. McBean joined Fairbridge as a young survey assistant in 1923 at his extraordinary house at Kingsley Farm near Old Umtali, which consisted of one very large room with thick drystone walls, no windows, one stable door, and a roof of large tarpaulins supported on poles of various lengths.

His African squatters paid their rent in produce, and each morning Fairbridge sat before a huge ledger and entered the tithes brought to him. He was a most interesting man, and never tired of telling stories of the old days. In spite of long treks and a very frugal way of living he was very fit: small and thin, but hard as nails, and strong and tough. He



R. S. T. Fairbridge

long treks and a very frugal way of living he was very fit: small and thin, but hard as nails, and wiry and tough. He believed in sandbaths rather than washing in water, and used to sit in his sandpit and throw the sand over his naked body just outside the doorway.

McBean's first meal with him smelt a bit queer, and when pressed to say what it was Fairbridge proudly said it was stewed rat. On McBean's enquiring for the alternative he was directed to biltong hanging up on a string. Strings went across the room from wall to wall, and on them hung clothes, biltong, bunches of bananas and many other oddments.

Occasionally a rat would start off to investigate, and all would go well until the string began to wobble as the rat reached the middle of the room, where it hesitated. This moment of indecision was the signal for Fairbridge (and McBean after a bit) to throw things at it — anything: boots, tin plates, -enamel mugs. There was nothing in the place to break, and, if they got him, that was supper for that night.

Out on fieldwork his lunch would consist of a rough mealie-meal cookie smeared with crude fat and placed on the nearest antheap for about 20 minutes; the other half of the cookie would then be slapped on top: result, ant-sandwich, all wriggly. "Delicious", said Fairbridge, and consumed it with relish.

Wayland did the full survey of Melssetter farms in 1897, work which can scarcely be faulted today. It has not been possible to ascertain exactly how or by whom the farms were named. Doubtless Wayland chose many names himself, and it seems likely that some, such as Westard Ho! and Kingsley, were suggested by Fairbridge who was a keen admirer of the novelist Charles Kingsley and possibly Albany from his earlier Grahamstown association. Some, such as Tilbury (James Tilbury English) and Lavina's Rust (Johanna Levina van Zyl) were chosen by their first owners. Presumably also the Dutch names, mostly descriptive of the views from the farms, were chosen by the original owners and were probably in use before the formal survey was completed. In chiNdau Nzuzu is the name for a water-sprite — according to legend one lived in the deep pool on Mount Peni, and so the name Mermaid's Grotto was chosen.

By 1897 Melssetter Township had been laid out with about 400 stands demarcated and according to the Stand Register over 100 had been taken up by September at prices varying between £30 and £120. Survey fees of £3 were due with the first of the four instalment payments, and the B.S.A. Co. charged 8% interest on arrear instalments, although in many instances the full amount was never paid and there is no further record of the would-be purchasers.

Longden found that the Company's tardiness in paying accounts made things awkward for him, and warned that in future he would have great difficulty in making purchases as people seemed indisposed to sell to the Company if they had to wait such a long time for payment. He continued to appeal to Salisbury for more silver for salary payments, but cash was a problem which continued over the years.

At the Police Camp Inspector Nesbitt, Sergeant Herbert Remmer, and Trooper Joe Nesbitt had some troubles with Police personnel. Native Constable Peter Jackson aged 46, an American Negro born in Philadelphia, was charged in March 1897 with theft of fowls and cooking utensils and with shooting at natives with intent to murder. Jackson and another policeman, Kataza, had been sent to find an escaped prisoner, and Jackson's defence on the theft charge was that his carriers complained of being hungry and he told them to collect some chickens. He had fired into the air to intimidate the escaped prisoner's relatives as he did not get any co-operation from them in his search, and had impressed some — who complained that they were handcuffed and legironed — to work on Steyn's farm. Kataza said that when he was in a hut with the women he heard a revolver fired. and Jackson called

him to come out with his gun and he ran out and fired in the air.

All evidence, including that of the two Native Constables, was signed by thumb prints. Peter Jackson was committed for trial on the charge of theft and was gaoled in Melsetter pending his removal to Umtali for trial. He escaped that night by climbing through the thatch of the gaol roof, and there is no further record of him.

Another Native Constable, Long Tom, started working for Dunbar Moodie in 1894 as groom, wagondriver and ploughman until he joined the Police in 1895. By 1899, aged 35, he was the prison warder. In May, accused of being drunk and using threatening language to members of the B.S.A. Police on lawful execution of their duty, he was received into prison and paid the £2 fine. Two weeks later he was re-admitted and charged with absenting himself from duty without leave, being drunk and incapable within the gaol precincts, and disobeying the gaoler's orders. He paid the £5 in preference to one month with Hard Labour, and was discharged from the service.

In 1897 the Medical Director, Dr. Fleming, enquired whether the doctor at the American Mission would be willing to undertake district work at usual District Surgeon's salary of £200 a year and horse and horse allowance and Dr. W. L. Thompson of Mount Selinda Mission filled in the application form. The Acting Administrator decided that his New York degree was not recognised in Rhodesia, that he could not be authorised to engage in private practice to the detriment of other qualified and licensed practitioners, and that the licence issued by the late Dunbar Moodie was quite irregular and insufficient for the purpose for which it was intended. He added that the decision did not interfere with Dr. Thompson's right to practise as a member of the Mission.

Dr. Thompson considered this to be a distinct breach of faith on the part of the Government and a personal insult to himself. "When I settled here four years ago the local Government official demanded to inspect my diplomas and certificates. After full correspondence the Administrator, himself a medical practitioner, granted me a licence to practise medicine. This licence was made out on a printed Government form, stamped with a Government £5 stamp, and signed by a Government official. You say this was an irregular proceeding. Even if it were irregular, that does not prove it invalid. If the Administrator was satisfied that, though my diploma was not from a college 'recognised in Rhodesia', it was still proper to grant me a licence, surely he had the power and authority to do so.

"It is only with the approval of the Mission that I have attempted to wait upon the settlers, and any revenue belongs to the Mission. For the sake of suffering humanity —there being no other medical aid available — I have, regardless of storm or danger and great difficulties of travel, attended by night and day to the cause of the sick, and have attended the majority of the settlers including Government officials and employees. My right or ability to do this has never been called in question."

Salisbury decided to accept Dr. Thompson's qualifications and he continued to serve the district. The horse allowance of £5 per month was paid regularly up to 1923 for the doctor at Mount Silinda, who looked after urgent cases in Chipinga long after a District Surgeon was stationed at Melsetter.



Melsetter 1898

In March 1897 three missionaries of the South Africa General Mission, Raney, Coupland and Kidd, were sent to do pioneer work on the eastern border of Rhodesia. They travelled by ship to Beira and by rail to Chimoio. From there they trekked on foot with carriers who eventually deserted them, carrying off most of their food and equipment. Much time was lost in an effort to recover these necessities, and they were physically very weak when they reached their destination.

In October Dr. Thompson wrote from Silinda introducing them to Longden and recommending their Mission for any assistance he could render. Longden arranged that they should set up their Station on the Rusitu river, and they built huts and prepared for the rainy season. It was then decided that John Coupland should stay with what remained of their supplies while the others returned to railhead to obtain more. From Chimoio Kidd returned to Cape Town to report on their situation.

When Raney got back he found Coupland very ill with malaria. The neighbours, the Humans of Uitkyk and the Moolmans of Voorspoed, were away and Raney had no one to whom he could turn for help. He sat down beside his companion, very much distressed and discouraged. Coupland told him not to be troubled, as if he died it would be a promotion. He died on 14th November and Raney buried him the following day at Uitkyk. Over the grave he placed a stone on which he carved the word PROMOTION and the date.

The place where the missionaries had settled was under the jurisdiction of Chief Muwushu and his sub-chief Dzingire, who were averse to these strangers invading the country and opposed to granting them any land, although many years later Dzingire testified that he could never forget helping to bury the first missionary and that always in his heart was the thought that Christianity must be a great thing when a white man was willing to die for the sake of telling it to others. Chief Ngorima gave permission for them to settle in his territory, and the Mission moved to the present site at Chinawekwe. although from the beginning it

was called Rusitu.

The Melsetter-Umtali road was a major problem, and in 1897 the Umtali Magistrate said that of all the road work needed in his district this one was first and foremost, and he hoped that Longden would back him up in pressing its urgency and need of improvement and repair. He considered that setting the road in proper working order would be an advantage to everybody, and that if the rinderpest inoculation proved successful Melsetter people would ride transport and reduce the very heavy rates of 20/- per 100 lbs.

He and Longden met at the Umvumvumu river and discussed what was needed, as the old road was almost impassable and it was a marvel how wagons travelled over it at all. £4 000 was then provided on the Estimates, and a new route was chosen, considerably shorter than the old and with easier gradients, on which Wayland surveyed and reserved Government outspans at convenient distances between the Township and the Umvumvumu river. The railway reached Umtali in 1898, after which the hazardous route to Chimoio was gradually discontinued for transport to Melsetter.

Mails sometimes missed catching the Salisbury coach: the runners with the incoming mails were so exhausted on reaching Melsetter that they could not leave immediately with the outgoing mail, and sending out for further runners meant a further delay.

By 1898 a further 100 stands in Melsetter Township had been bought, and there were about 50 residents in the town and about 450 men, women and children in the district. In the township two stores and three dwelling houses of brick under corrugated iron were erected, and blue and red gums, casuarinas and black wattle trees were growing well on both sides of the principal streets. The water supply was considered to be very good, and a watercourse down the centre of the town from north to south satisfactorily met the requirements of the inhabitants.

Arrangements were made to have a sale of stands facing the Market Square, the price to be £80 each, and Longden suggested that other stands should also be offered for public auction on the same day as several residents were desirous of obtaining stands on the outskirts of the town.

A new Police Camp was built and three cells erected for confinement of prisoners. The story goes that, when an early prisoner was sentenced to three months' hard labour, he was sent home before being gaoled in a pole-and-dagga hut to collect his first month's rations, and was told to tell his wife to bring him enough food each month for the length of his stay.

Work was started on the new road, which ran through Sawyerombi West, with the first outspan just below today's Nyashama homestead, and came out at the confluence of the Nyanyadzi and Biriwiri rivers.

Rinderpest had died out and stock was in splendid condition. Besides their cattle, farmers had sheep, goats, pigs, horses, donkeys and mules. In the three districts about 72 farms were occupied, with fruit trees growing well: figs and guavas thrived specially well, and peaches and vines had started bearing. Almost every kind of vegetable was grown, and the chief crops were mealies, oats, wheat, barley, pumpkins, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and onions. Most farmers had tobacco of a fair quality in taste and aroma. Tea and coffee planting was being tried with very encouraging results.

Willem Prinsloo paid 1 / 6d per morgen for Albany, which was also the price paid for the excess on some farms which were larger than the original grant amount.

Toxine was used on locusts with good effect and many swarms were destroyed, but it was felt that unless the Portuguese co-operated in using it the district would continually be visited by the pest.

Attendance at Farmers' Association meetings was very good, with nearly all farmers being members.

There was a Tennis Club with a fairly good court and steps were taken to start a Cricket Club and a Racing Club. A very keen interest was taken in the Rifle Club which had about 60 members and a canvas target as a temporary range; ammunition was supplied to the Club by the Government at 10/- per 100 rounds for Lee Metford and 15/3 for Martini-Henri rifles.

In November H. Remmer wrote to the R.M.:
"I hear you are in want of a Gaoler and Municipal Police Sergeant. I should very much like the billet. I will undertake the work for £15 a month, rations and quarters. My time of service with the B.S.A. Company Police will expire on December 23rd 1898, when I will have served two years. If you are in favour of this application, I will be very much obliged if you will forward it to Salisbury." On 2nd December the Law Department wired that Sergeant Remmer was fit for any position of trust and would make a good gaoler. Bertie Remmer married Engela, daughter of G. F. Heyns, soon afterwards.

A 78-mile long telegraph line with wooden poles was erected from Umtali, and Melssetter Telegraph Office was opened on the 10th January 1899 for the transmission of public business, with rates the same as to other Rhodesian offices. After this most official correspondence was conducted by telegraph, and telegrams in original handwriting are in the National Archives, many very long and difficult to read.

In January 1899 a meeting of inhabitants requested the Government to apply the provisions of Village Regulations to the township, and recommended the appointment of a Board to carry out the provisions. Salisbury approved of the application, but said that a Board of Management would be premature in view of the smallness of the population of the town, and asked Longden to attend personally to preparing bye-laws and carrying out the rules and regulations. The cemetery site on Stand 6 was selected and reserved, with provision for the requirements of the various denominations.

A flourishing Athletic and Dramatic Club arranged



Government Notice, No. 11 of 1899.

Administrator's Office, Salisbury, 13th January, 1899.

UNDER and by virtue of the powers conferred upon me by Sub-section 3 of Section 3 of Act No. 27 of 1882 of the Cape Colony intituled the "Police Offences Act, 1882," and the Administrator's Empowering Regulations, 1895, I do hereby declare Part 1 of the said Act to be in force from this date within the Township of Melssetter, which, with the reserve adjoining, is bounded as follows :—

On the North by Sawerombi, on the South East by the farms "Belmont," "Green Mount," and "Nyhodi"; on the East by the farm "Lindley"; on the West by Outspan and the farm "Fairfield," and on the North East by the farm "Westfield."

THOMAS C. SCANLEN,

Acting Administrator.

By command of His Honour
the Acting Administrator.

PERCY INSKIPP,

283

Under Secretary.

Sports and Concerts during the Nachتماال weekends.

Predikant le Roux held services regularly in Dutch and once a month in English in the pole-and-dagga D.R. Church. During the year a schoolroom, 60' x 30', was built of brick and iron, and here he ably managed the undenominational school. Fees were reasonable, but attendance was only fair as few European children were receiving any education because most farmers had very limited means and had not been able to get markets for their produce, and lack of boarding accommodation also prevented the filling of the spacious school building.

The F. A. distributed poison for the destruction of vermin and some very gratifying results were reported: on one farm alone three lions and a couple of "tigers" and numerous small vermin were destroyed. (Leopards were then commonly called tigers). Some ammunition, over from the issue to the Moodie Trek, was handed in and the C.C. sold some of it to farmers for guarding against the depredations of wild animals; in asking for permission to sell the lot he said he did not think it safe to keep it in the grass hut store.

Dunstan was transferred to J. T. English from his brother's estate and he applied for permission to occupy it as a stock farm only without having to build on it; his hands were full on Tilbury, where he employed several white men putting up permanent substantial stone buildings roofed with corrugated iron, including a large homestead and a cattle shed. He also had some 50 acres under cultivation and an orchard of over 500 selected imported fruit trees.

Other farmers were not in such a good position: one had run up a debt of £23.15.8d at the B.S.A. Store, which he could not settle owing to illness and being unable to find work; he said that if the Company pressed the account he would have to dispose of his interest here, and his Promissory Note at four months was accepted.

Wayland's general survey of the district was progressing satisfactorily, and he and the Portuguese Surveyor fixed the intermediate beacons between those erected by the Anglo-Portuguese Boundary Delimitation Commissioners.

The new road to Umtali was opened for traffic about July. It was the shortest route ever made to Umtali, and the journey could comfortably be done in eight days instead of the fortnight or three weeks which the old road had taken, and its opening reduced transport costs by 50%. Unfortunately the necessary drains and culverts were not made before the rainy season set in so a great deal of damage was done, and as the drifts also needed to be remade each year it was a difficult road to maintain.

Construction of a new road to the south was started along the banks of the Nyahode until near its confluence with the Rusitu river and then almost due south to Silinda, instead of following the old very bad and circuitous road over the Waterfall range of mountains.

In October M. J. Martin made the first of his planned five-year anniversary visits to Ebenhaezer, and over 80 Melsetter residents signed a letter of appreciation to mark the occasion, congratulating Mr. and Mrs. Martin on having borne their share of trials and hardships very well, and wishing them long life and prosperity.

The fact that the posts of Resident Magistrate and Civil Commissioner were held by one person, who had to carry out instructions from all Departments in Salisbury, led to some acrimonious correspondence while H. A. Cloete was Acting R.M. and C.C. in 1899 during Longden's absence on leave.

The argument started when the Surveyor-General sent the C.C. to travel along the boundary and report on farms which had been partly or wholly cut off by the delimitation. He was absent from his office for nine days, but part of the frontier still remained to be inspected. In March the Public Prosecutor objected to Magistrates going out of their offices without having previously obtained his permission.

The Surveyor-General, being anxious that the interests of regularity should be promoted, requested instructions for his future guidance in giving directions to the Civil Commissioner. He had not known that Magistrates were under the control of the Public Prosecutor in regard to their movements, and had thought that Magistrates' clerks were Assistant R.M.s, who could carry on the Public Prosecutor's business in the absence of the C.C.

The Administrator ruled that the Surveyor-General should consult the Department of Public Prosecution before sending a C.C. and R. M. on any assignment away from his headquarters, and arrangements would then be made for the performance of duties during his absence.



The Surveyor-General told the Public Prosecutor that it was necessary for the C.C. to visit and report on the position of farms between the Rusitu and Umvumvumu rivers, and asked the Under-Secretary to make the necessary arrangements. A month later Cloete reported that he had not received his instructions, and even if these arrived by the next mail he would not be able to proceed with the work immediately as his only horse had been sent to Umtali by His Honour's orders.

The Administrator then approved of Cloete's hiring a horse and proceeding on the tour provided he could arrange for the performance of his duties during his absence, and the Acting Under-Secretary asked the

Surveyor-General to consult with the Acting Public Prosecutor on the arrangements for Cloete's duties during his absence.

One wonders whether it was because so many senior officials were Acting that so much confusion resulted. The next letter was from the Acting Secretary of the Law Department in May, only two months after the Public Prosecutor had started the argument, and flatly contradicts the first letter. "The Acting Public Prosecutor has not at any time desired that he should be consulted with reference to arrangements for the performance of a Magistrate's duties when absent from his station. If anything indicating the contrary appears in correspondence it has been inserted incautiously."

A telegram was then sent to Cloete authorising him to visit and report on the farms and to ask Native Commissioner Meredith to take any statements during his absence. Cloete's last letter on the subject reads as something of an anti-climax. He asked permission to postpone visiting the farms, as should he leave his station then it would interfere with his studies for the forthcoming examination.

Chapter 5

In 1900 the Anglo-Boer war caused a general depression which severely affected trade and commerce. Freight by ship and rail was very difficult to obtain and there were constant delays on Beira Railways. Melsetter residents had to pay carriage at the rate of 10/- per 100 lbs, soon afterwards increased to 15/-, from Umtali, where prices were already very high and increased by the institution of Customs Duties.



For supplies to road parties and Government Departments Martin charged 30/- per 200-lb bag of mealies, 33/- to 34/- a 200-lb bag of oofoo (mealie meal), 45/- per 100-lb bag of salt, and 9d per bundle for oats. Every wagon came to grief in delivering supplies to Chipinga, and Martin complained about the state of the road.

Native administration was affected by a new Ordinance under which lobolo, or marriage compensation, had to be paid in full at the time of marriage, the advantages of which were fully realised by older and more intelligent natives especially those with marriageable daughters, but the younger ones preferred the old system whereby wives could be obtained on credit and the lobolo paid over a long period of years.

Judicial work was light as crime among the European population was practically nonexistent and the 500 Settlers had proved themselves most orderly and law-abiding, and civil jurisdiction work was also very light as the settlers were averse to litigation except in extreme cases and also there was difficulty in obtaining legal advice as there were no local practitioners.

Cases came before the court of witchcraft, abduction, house-breaking, man-stealing, fraud, theft, contraventions of the Village Management Regulations, Master & Servants' Act, and Game Preservation Ordinance. The Magistrate felt that these native cases were serious and represented only a very small percentage of the crimes actually committed because the police force was so small and ill-mounted it was impossible to patrol the country thoroughly, and European farmers were not keen on giving evidence which would lead to criminal prosecutions as their being called as witnesses would entail having to travel long distances to and from the Court, in most cases on foot, and their absence would leave their wives, families and stock without protection.

The Farmers' Association said that it was necessary for the welfare and protection of farmers that an experienced and competent Cattle Inspector be appointed, as the duties of the Native Commissioner prevented his devoting sufficient time and attention to this work. There had been several losses from lung sickness, and one farmer had lost 100 head of valuable breeding cattle in two months which he attributed to the laxity in administration of quarantine regulations. In June C. E. Owen was appointed Cattle Inspector at a salary of £200 per annum.

The Agricultural Department imported Algerian Rust Resisting Oats for distribution among farmers, and Wayland reported having located deposits of lime. The delimitations on his inspection plan of 72 farms were approved, of which some details are of interest:

the position of Dunblane had to be sorted out as the beacons were originally located before the Anglo-Portuguese boundary was delineated; on Westfield and Jameson the areas were below the amount to which the owners were entitled; objections were dealt with on the boundary between Orange Grove and Roede; and a specific inspection was made with regard to the farm Tarka or Glenmore, which included the farm Glencoe.

Iron rails and plates were received for the demarcation of the boundary and, as no other transport was available, Wayland tried to get them from the township to the boundary in his field wagon, but owing to the very bad state of the road and its absence in places the wagon collapsed when a hind wheel broke. Longden's wagon suffered a similar fate, and Wayland then used the four front wheels and managed to proceed under immense difficulties.



Louis and Tom Ferreira leaving for a shooting trip

In 1900 the F.A. said that the law prohibiting the shooting of bushbuck in this district was unnecessary and asked for the relevant clause to be deleted from the Game Law. They pointed out that bushbuck were well protected by their habits and the nature of the country; in spite of indiscriminate shooting they seemed to have increased in numbers, they did much damage to crops, and farmers depended largely on them for meat supplies.

At the same time apparently universal contraventions of the Game Preservation Ordinance by both whites and natives caused concern to the Magistrate, who said that only two cases had been brought to light during the year yet he was told on all sides that shooting of all descriptions of game continued both in and out of the close season, and while very few licences were taken out all farmers were in the habit of shooting game. A few years later he was pleased to report convictions for shooting Royal Game which was an offence difficult to prove and committed often.

Dr. W. T. Lawrence took over at Mount Silinda Mission, and his qualifications were queried in much the same way as Dr. Thompson's had been three years earlier. When the Chief Secretary asked for Dr. Lawrence's diplomas to be submitted to see if they would qualify him to be registered, the Rev. F. W. Bates replied that Dr. Lawrence was a graduate of a leading New York medical school which was not on the very meagre list of schools accepted by the Company. Dr. Lawrence was the only medical practitioner south of Melssetter and had already attended settlers and expected more calls. Bates asked the Company to say whether he should refuse these calls: judging from experience it would be a life and death question. Dr. Lawrence's qualifications were accepted and he continued to look after patients in the Chipinga area.

Dr. 1. Sutherland came to Melsetter as District Surgeon but died very suddenly a few months later: Mrs. Sutherland was left with two little children without any means of support and Longden asked the Government to pay her passage back to England.

A highlight of 1900 was the visit in July of Cecil John Rhodes, whose party had six horses and three mule-wagons, one of which was fitted up for anyone to travel in if he did not wish to ride and the others carried luggage, provisions and servants. It was delightful weather with cold nights and sunny days.

Rhodes was very pleased with his visit; he found the settlers contented and thriving and bravely determined to face and overcome all difficulties. He encouraged them to come to his camp and tell him their troubles, but found they had very few. He had a knack of making people feel at home, and arranged for coffee, cigars and cigarettes to be passed round while he chatted with them for hours. The settlers had absolute confidence in their leaders, Longden and le Roux, and lived together like a big family, sympathising in each others' troubles and gaining by others' experiences, and told Rhodes that they looked upon him as a father.

On one occasion Rhodes had his hat on a bench beside him: he lifted it up and put it on merely in order to raise it as a tribute to the people who had gone through so much. His visit was a great excitement for the children as he brought the first toys they had ever seen from a shop: Andries Kok received a beautiful grey wooden horse with a black mane and one foot up, with a scotchcart at the back, and attributes his continued love of horses partly to this gift.

It was hoped that Rhodes would allocate more land, and Prinsloo started the ball rolling by asking if he could have, for himself and his three sons, more than his 3 000 morgen. When asked if the farm were beneficially occupied, Prinsloo replied that they just lived there and had done no development, whereupon Rhodes said that if he worked it he would find it enough. That ended the discussion and no one asked for more land.

Rhodes took a great interest in Melsetter's farming and visited many farms and outlined schemes for the importation of cattle, sheep and pigs for distribution with payment to extend over four years carrying 5% interest. He also discussed the care of a bull which he had previously imported for Melsetter farmers; the erection of a Pioneer Memorial to which he promised a donation; and expressed his dissatisfaction with the pole-and-dagga huts which served as Government buildings and Magistrate's quarters, and gave Longden 30 acres for a house for himself. Rhodes was sorry when the time came to leave, and the people showed genuine regret when he shook hands with them on his departure.

Shortly afterwards pigs were imported and offered for sale at £2 each, with the purchasers guaranteeing to keep them for breeding purposes for two years. The bull was in Longden's care and a camp was made for it: a little later the Chief Accountant telegraphed indignantly about the animal for which the Government had built a special kraal and had paid 30/- a month for herding it, and asked in what circumstances it had been allowed to stray into a bog. The circumstances remain unknown, but apparently the bull suffered no damage, and soon a new camp was made for it with a shed of rough bush timber and a galvanised iron roof as Longden felt it was dangerous to place a valuable animal in an ordinary shed of wattle and thatch on account of risk by fire.



The Gwasha Drawn by Olive McLeod

Longden, having been encouraged by Rhodes to draw up plans for his own house, built The Residency, commonly known as The Gwasha (wooded ravine), and developed the site with a well-laid out beautiful garden, orchard and tree plantation.

£3000 had been placed on the Estimates for the Government Building, and Longden reported that the 150000 bricks made by Brent were ready for official inspection, and told the Public Works Department that he had shown the cover plans and specifications to Rhodes, who had agreed that it was necessary to erect the public offices without

delay and that the proposed expensive gaol was unnecessary. Longden urged that, if the funds available were inadequate to complete the whole building according to plan, three cells only should be erected which would meet all present requirements, and the whole front block of offices be started immediately.

Building started under the supervision of a P.W.D. foreman to whom Longden gave specific instructions regarding the fireplaces —an absolute necessity in winter — in all the offices, and the siting of the building, the stables and the urinals between the stables and the cells. The building was completed in 1901: the date, some initials and the name Remmer may be seen in the ornamental cement work at the sides of the main Courthouse door, and other initials are at the side of the Post Office door. In 1908 the Director of Public Works drew attention to the Melssetter Public Offices, erected under proper supervision at a cost of £2 250, repairs to which to that date amounted only to about £5.



*Picnic at Melssetter waterfall, 1900. Left to right: Back; Mr and Mrs Orpen, W.M. Longden, Dr and Mrs Sutherland
Middle; Molly Cannell, Miss Willows, Mrs Meredith, Alice Cannell, Mrs le Roux, Mrs Hoal
Front; P. Shinn, T. Willows, Carl le Roux, Arthur Cannell, Rev. P.L. le Roux, E. Hoal. Side; Jampot*

An unsuitable teacher was employed at a farm school, whom Longden described as having made a scurrilous and libellous attack on English, and as unfit for appointment, disseminating erroneous information and causing agitation and unrest: in that community any person with the slightest pretence to a little learning, who would write their letters for them, and who was given to much reading of the Bible and the offering up of long prayers, would always be held by them only a little lower than the angels. The school was closed down shortly afterwards.

Lack of support for the Dutch Reformed Church School also led to its being closed in 1900 and no education was available for any Melssetter children. In 1900 and 1901 Longden called meetings of interested farmer-parents to discuss the problem, the biggest difficulty being the boarding and lodging of children as there was no suitable building nor anyone prepared to take on the supervision of a boarding establishment.

After discussion between Longden and Bates, it was arranged that a Managers' Committee of Mount Silinda Mission would run a school in the township. The Managers asked the Government for a grant of £300 a year, five acres of land and a loan towards the erection of buildings and purchase of school supplies, and undertook to supply the teachers and to erect the buildings. They laid down charges which they considered the very lowest possible. with an entrance fee of £2 towards furnishing the dormitories; the boarding department was to be open to all girls and to boys under 12 with board at a maximum of 10/- a week and 6d a week charged for washing; and tuition fees were 3/6d to 7/- a month according to grade with the pupils paying for books.

Conditions in the district were reasonably good and there seemed little doubt that these fees could be met by parents. The Mission's parent Society in America was not at all certain that one of their missionaries would really want to teach white children and needed to be reassured, so there was some cabling between Silinda and Boston before permission was granted for the release of Miss Helen Gilson.

There was concern that no provision had yet been made on the Estimates for any hospital

accommodation: patients from the country were continually being brought into town and, unless they were provided for by the kindness of local residents, there was no place for them to remain while being treated by the District Surgeon. A District Surgeon's residence was also necessary, as the presence of a D.S. was imperative and no medical practitioner would stay if no house was provided.

Longden said that the Farmers' Association was doing little good and that its discussions savoured more of politics than agriculture, but, as several enterprising farmers had come into the district, he had little doubt that the FA. would be re-formed and run on proper lines, do good work, and be deserving of financial support. His forecast was correct and the Association became very active and duly received a Government grant.

Hannes Steyn had brought up one Merino ram and four or five ewes in 1895, which had increased at an extraordinary rate and the mortality had been exceedingly small. Rams were procured from this little flock by farmers who had obtained native ewes, and the first cross was a fine, robust and hardy animal which grew faster and eventually larger than either of its parents. As Melssetter was such good sheep country and so highly suited to Merinos, Longden asked the B.S.A. Company whether it would be possible to import some.

A female Burchell zebra ran alone on Fairfield for some time grazing with the cattle, and one evening accompanied them into the kraal, where George Heyns captured her and tied her up. He applied for permission to keep her and Longden explained that the capture of the animals was practically a contravention of the Game Ordinance, but he referred the request to the Administrator saying that he assumed there would be no objection to her being kept if Heyns domesticated her and if possible bred from her by crossing with a horse or donkey: he had lent some donkeys with which she appeared desirous of associating and asked for sanction for this move. Heyns was allowed to keep the zebra, but she never bred. Hans helped his father to tame her by tying her to a donkey, and when she was tame he led her to Melssetter to the camp above the old diptank, where she ran for 17 years until she died aged about 24 years.



When the devastating cattle disease of African Coast Fever (usually referred to as A.C.F., or sometimes East Coast Fever, E.C.F.) appeared in Rhodesia in 1901 it was not immediately identified as a new disease and was called Rhodesian Redwater. Expert advice was sought and in due course Professor Koch ascertained the tick-borne cause of A.C.F. and compulsory dipping laws, the cattle movement permit system, and regular inspection of all cattle were introduced. Regulations were drafted for the control of A.C.F. and cattle movements and the Veterinary Department was given wide powers and was supported whole-heartedly by the cooperation of Melssetter farmers. For years these farmers had been asking for better cattle inspection arrangements and, on being advised to dip their cattle regularly, they set to work to build dipping tanks.

In spite of co-operation and precautions the disease affected herds very gravely, and Melssetter, so dependent on ox transport, was very badly hit, and for over 40 years was adversely affected by A.C.F.

The Secretary for Agriculture wrote that he thought the disease in Melssetter was red-water, but in consequence of doubts locally expressed he asked that the doctor, who would know the process, should take blood from superficial veins of ear or nose of certainly infected animals, after washing

the parts quite clean, and send the films for examination. No result was reported, but there was no doubt that A.C.F. had reached Melsetter.

Farming came to a standstill and the settlers were practically ruined through the enormous losses of cattle. Road traffic was suspended in March and necessary supplies became exceedingly expensive and the cost of housekeeping was proportionately increased and trade was practically at a standstill. The absence of milk was felt very seriously. It had also been an unprecedentedly dry season and crops were a partial failure, and lions, leopards and wild dogs — the latter in packs up to 50 strong — had taken their toll. The distress was so great that the Government had to send in provisions, and when Martin applied for assistance in getting wire netting from Umtali he was asked what the weight would be as the Transport Department was experiencing great difficulties in getting food to Melsetter.

A farmer applied for permission to destroy certain eland which were mixing with his healthy isolated cattle, and in reply the Agricultural Department said that there was no proof that eland contracted redwater and in that case ticks dropped from them were not infectious, so the desired authority could not be recommended.

Local remedies were tried in the efforts to find a cure, and Longden sent a messenger to Umtali, at the usual price of 10/- for the trip, with roots and leaves alleged to be a native remedy for redwater.

M. J. Martin was selected to represent the district in a Conference on the severe losses and the distress likely to arise. On his return from Salisbury he reported that he had laid matters fully before the Administrator, who informed him that a Farmers' and Transport Aid Board had been appointed to deal with applications from persons in distress through the ravages of the disease. Applications for aid or relief had to be made on printed forms obtained by applying personally at the Melsetter Magistrate's office and forwarded without delay.

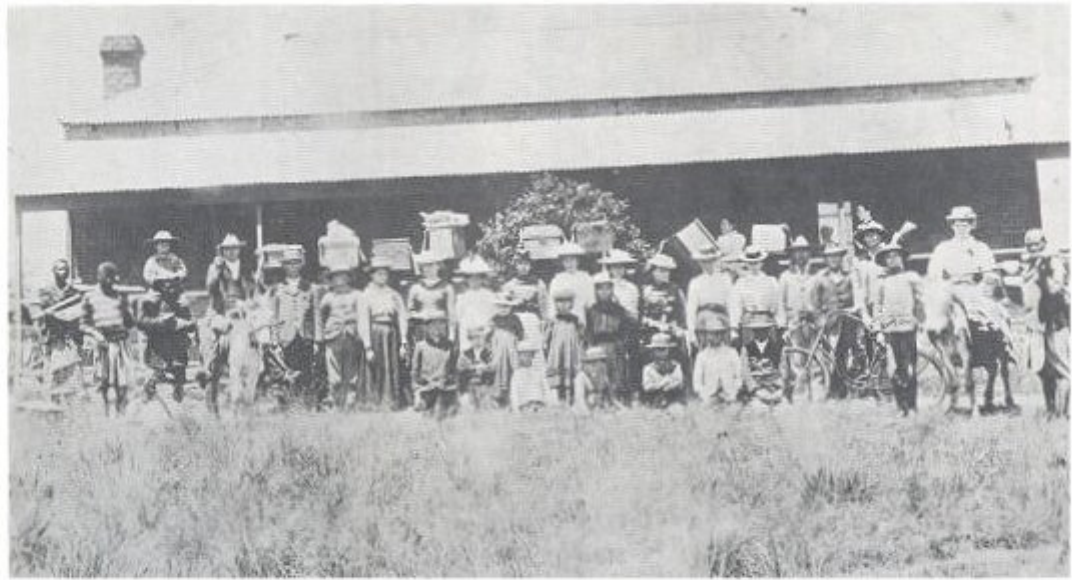
	Dr.	
Govt grant for Miss Clarke's travelling expenses	20. 0. 0.	
Cash refunded by Miss C.'s travelling exes.	4. 1. 0.	
Cash refunded by H. W. Peabody & Co., school desks	2.11. 3.	
Fees:		
Boarding	53. 0. 0.	
Music	1.10. 0.	54.10. 0.
Cash for Book, Slates etc.		1.15. 0.
		<u>82.17. 3.</u>
Govt. grants unpaid:		
Quarterly grant	75. 0. 0.	
For loss incurred for Remission of Tuition	44. 0. 0.	
For loss incurred for Diminution of Boarding Fee	77. 7. 6.	196. 7. 6.
		279. 4. 9.
Balance	£ 58.11. 5.	
		<u>£337.16. 2.</u>

**ACCOUNTS FOR
MELSETTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
Quarter ending December 31, 1902**

		Cr.
Bal.		43.12. 1.
Household expenses:		
Groceries	2.17. 6.	
Flour & grain	8.10. 8.	
Vegetables	3.10.10.	
Butter & eggs	7.15. 2.	
Licence for hunting & ammunition	1. 5. 6.	
Meat 11/9, Wood 14/3		
Paraffin £1.5.0.	2. 7. 0.	
Labour:		
European helper	5. 0. 0.	
Native boys	7. 3. 6.	
Furnishings:		
Bedding	18. 4. 7.	
Diningroom	1. 1. 9.	
Kitchen	10. 0.	
Dormitory	1. 7. 0.	
Schoolroom partition	3. 0. 0.	
Bal. paid for school desks ...	3.19. 0.	
Pd. towards furnishings on Order	25. 0. 0.	53. 2. 4.
Salary for Quarter ending Sept 30		25. 8. 7.
School Supplies:		
Slates, Books, Sewing Materials, etc.		4.18. 6.
Survey Fees		18. 0. 0.
Balance on Miss C.'s travelling expenses		14.15. 6.
Postage, Stationery, Telegrams		14. 0.
		<u>£199. 1. 2.</u>
Bills Unpaid Dec 31:		
Groceries supplied by Govt.	67. 9. 6.	
Bills at Melsetter shops	25. 0. 3.	
Salaries	46. 5. 3.	138.15. 0.
		<u>£337.16. 2.</u>

In January 1902 the School opened with Miss Gilson as Headmistress and Miss Clarke the assistant teacher in the large schoolroom which had been built earlier. By then everybody was in a very difficult financial position, and as the Managers realised that parents could not afford very much they waived the entrance fee, the charges for washing and books, and medical fees in most cases of illness, and ran the school at a heavy loss to themselves.

In spite of the concessions few parents found it possible to pay the tuition and boarding fees, and in June the Managers said they were unable to do more than they were doing and that Government assistance was essential in order to increase the attendance. In August it was announced that, for one term only, no tuition fees would be charged and the boarding fee would be reduced to £2.10, and the Government undertook to make good to the Managers any loss incurred by the remission of tuition fees and the diminution of boarding fees, and gave them permission to buy provisions for the boarders at cost price from the supplies sent to Melsetter to relieve distress. In October Miss Gilson asked for the grant to be continued for at least another term as, notwithstanding all that was being done, the educational problems were not solved. £2.10 covered all expense except clothing for the term of thirteen weeks, yet many people claimed that they could not pay this amount, and more than two-thirds of the children were growing up in ignorance.

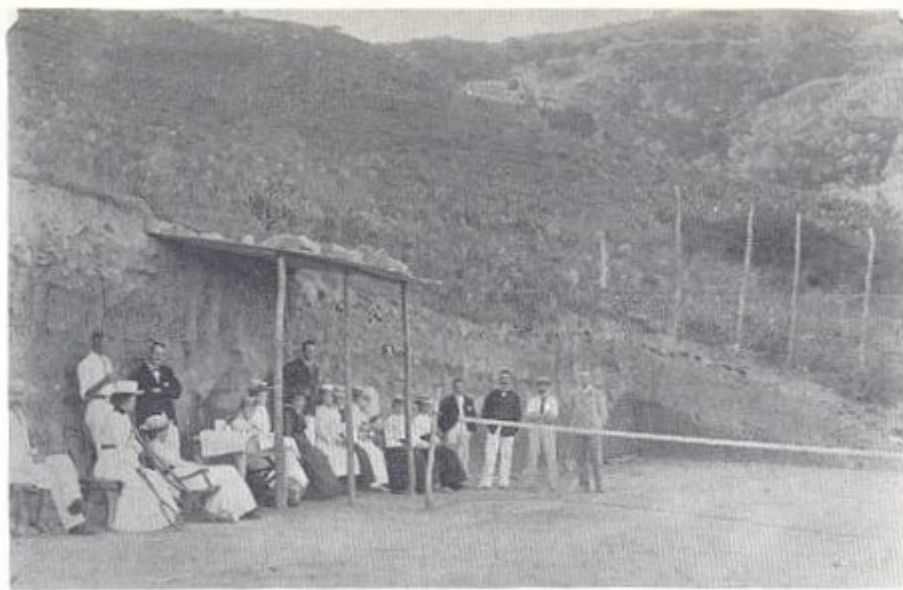


Melsetter School, 1902. Back Row: Miss Clarke, Miss Gilson.

*Second Row: Cecil Foreman, C. Heyns, W. Coetzer, J. Olwage, Susan Coetzer, Polly Webser, Gerty Kok, Marie Coetzer, Martha Steyn
Nellie Kok, Susannah Olwage, Lenie Hesselman, Alice Gifford, L. Steyn, Alfred Gifford (with bicycle) Thomas Ferreira, Irina or Lena
Ferreira (on donkey) Front Row: Wijnand Schoultz, Tommy Henry, Alice Cannell, Travers Henry, Duddy Moodie, Minnie du Preez,
Andries Kok, J. Martin, Freddie Foreman (in the carrier.)*

Soon after she started Miss Gilson put forward the case for three terms instead of four: as there were no children of school age in the township there were no day scholars, and most lived from 20 to 65 miles away and required from three to seven days for the journey each way; some had no wagons and depended on neighbours for conveyance; rain from November to April often made it impossible to reach Melsetter on a given date; and with four terms the short holidays were impracticable as some pupils could not get home and back and had nowhere to stay in Melsetter, and teachers could not be expected to stay to look after them as they needed a break themselves. The Department replied that it would be very inconvenient to have three terms instead of four, as Melsetter School would not be on the same footing as all other Schools in Rhodesia, but somehow three terms were accepted, with the long holidays from July to September.

The school hours were from 9 till 11 and from 2 to 5, and the following year was in session four and half hours each day, besides one hour of sewing and one hour of domestic economy for the girls, one hour of industrial training for the boys and one half-hour of instruction in the evening. Out of school hours Miss Gilson kept the children occupied in planting mealies and vegetables with a view to making the school self-supporting.



Melsetter Tennis Club

In 1902 Longden said he had been tied to the office since his arrival as nobody else was qualified to do the work, and had been unable to get around the district as he should. He recommended that L. F. H. Roberts, who had passed the Examination, be appointed Assistant Magistrate, and that Edgar Hoal be authorised to sign as C.C. Hoal also carried out postal and telegraphic duties, and by 1902 his salary had been raised to £30 per month, and when his wife visited England he was able to arrange for half his salary to be paid to her there through the Company's London office.

Postal arrangements continued to be unsatisfactory. Mails took 3¼ days from Umtali, less than 80 miles by the route the postboys took. Runners made the whole journey without a break and consequently travelled very slowly and after a few journeys became footsore which necessitated the frequent engagement of fresh boys.

Tom Brent, for Meikle Brothers, completed a road to Uitkyk, for which the Government paid for the labour and lent two portable forges and a small anvil, which Brent promised to return to Melsetter as soon as transport was obtainable.

Public events included the establishment of the Cricket Club, the building of a second tennis court, and the celebration of the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Mary with two public holidays and an official church service on Coronation Day.

Longden made enquiries on behalf of George Willows, an enterprising farmer who was desirous of obtaining special facilities for the importation of sheep. Beira-Mashonaland Railways quoted their rates for sheep as: from Gwelo to Salisbury 15/ 8d per head and from Salisbury to Umtali 14/ 2d per head, with a rebate of 25% allowed on complete wagonloads of approximately 60 head. It is not certain whether Willows imported any, but gradually farmers were slowly acquiring sheep.

In view of the depredations amongst stock by wild animals farmers applied for permission to arm their native herds with a rifle and ten rounds each, and the C.C. issued provisional permits pending



Rev. Douglas Wood

confirmation by the Administrator, but was told that His Honour was averse to issues of rifles to natives under any circumstances.

The Rev. Douglas Wood signed the lease for the Rusitu Mission land before Longden. He compiled a brief chiNdau grammar and dictionary and wrote the first hymn in chiNdau: Jesu wakandida (Jesus loves me). Raney brought his bride to Rusitu, and the first local man, Timothy Chianguangu, was converted to Christianity.

Chapter 6

Between 1903 and 1905 problems continued but some progress was made in spite of difficulties.

The Melsegger Farmers' and Transport Aid Board, consisting of the C.C., M. J. Martin and H. du Plessis, was given to understand that farmers were compelled to take donkeys at £19 or get no assistance at all. 307 animals arrived in very bad condition and 77 died prior to allotment: it was learned later that Melsegger was sent the rejects after others had had first choice. Of the 229 taken by 30 farmers many died, not from want of care but from disease, the remedies for which (if any) were unknown locally.



A Melsegger waterfall

The price caused great dissatisfaction and donkeys were a complete failure for transport riding; for ploughing they were some use and although there was no market for agricultural produce farmers were able to make sufficient to keep their families in food and the issue of Government supplies to farmers in reduced circumstances was discontinued. These supplies had been charged to the recipients but the CC. was unable to collect the money owing and there seemed no prospect of anything being paid for a long while as the farmers were poverty-stricken since the loss of their cattle and had made nothing out of the donkeys.

A review of the first year at the School showed that of the 29 children in school 19 were aged between 14 and 20, but only two were beyond Std. II. Most had such a limited knowledge of English that very little apparent progress could be made in a term, but parents withdrew children whenever they could not find the £2.10 for any one term. The fluctuation in numbers was disconcerting: the school had opened with four and numbers got as high as 32, but two pupils only attended for the whole year, and 25 were there for one term only; and it seemed utterly impossible to lead parents to see how much was lost by such irregular attendance especially when a new language was being learned, and during absence from school scarcely a word of English was heard.

Miss Gilson had to battle against the indifference and apathy of parents, many of whom considered their children's education finished even before they had completed Std. III, and she asked whether the Government could afford to have 100 girls and boys growing up unable to read and write English. A startling fact the Inspector learned was that some white people were in the habit of taking letters they received to be read by natives who had been educated at Mission schools. Extraordinary excuses were given for not sending children to school: one was that it was not worth while to provide clothing if Government help was to be for one term only; and another was that children were made to work at school, the girls keeping their rooms and their own effects in order and the boys making furniture: such work was said to be natives' work, although one objector was known to have employed his daughter at home handing up bricks when he was building his house.

The Inspector said that the Dutch Reformed Minister and such influential men as Martin gave no countenance to these objections, and he felt that probably the root of all objections was that no Dutch was taught but as the children were so far behind in the official language of the country at present all their time must be devoted to that tongue. In June 1903, after considerable pressure had been exerted, the Government extended the arrangement for financial assistance for one year.



Government Offices and Officials about 1904.

Back row: Inspector R.C.Nesbitt, L.F.H.Roberts, W.Webster, E.Hoal, H.Remmer, F.Ferguson, D.Bill, Tpr.J.Nesbitt.

Front row: L.C.Meredith, W.M.Longden, Dr W.G.Rose.

The six cell gaol was on occasion found inadequate and more prisoners were incarcerated than was considered advisable by the District Surgeon, and the Magistrate recommended that special apartments should be provided for female prisoners and for the confinement of persons of unsound mind. The average annual expenditure for each prisoner was £8.8.7d for discipline and 18/- for maintenance.

The Postmaster-General asked for a confidential report on the manner in which the Post Office was being conducted, as the Postmaster was not properly attending to his duties and might be giving way to intemperate habits. Longden replied that the officer apparently conducted himself with propriety. He had inspected the Post Office and found it being conducted in a satisfactory manner and the entries in the books corresponded with the vouchers produced: on checking the postage stamps a surplus of 3d was found, explained by the fact that a customer had deposited 1/- to meet charges which might arise and 7d of this had been used, leaving a balance of 3d. In reply to the complaint that the postmaster was irregular in calling on the telegraph, Longden pointed out that this might be accounted for by the fact that the line was in a very faulty condition and disconnections were frequent; he himself had been repeatedly inconvenienced by the line being down, and in his opinion the continual repairing of a decayed line was false economy and the substitution of iron poles would be far cheaper in the end. In 1904 the telegraph line between Umtali and Melssetter was re-poled with iron poles.

In 1903 William George Rose arrived as District Surgeon: his Australian drawl, husky voice and dry sense of humour are characteristics still remembered. For many years all his practice was on horseback or on foot through rain, heat, flood, storms and swollen rivers, and many tributes are paid to his memory as the most wonderful man who never failed to come when needed.



Dr Rose riding through a swollen river

A detailed early report on a visit many miles from the Doctor's home shows his thoroughness: he proceeded to a kraal on the Tanganda river to examine a woman alleged to have been assegaied. She had received a 1¼" wound on the left side between the ribs, which was such as might have been caused by an assegai and which had penetrated the chest wall; there was a protrusion of lung through the wound, which had united at its edges all round. The doctor considered that the wound was not likely to prove fatal.

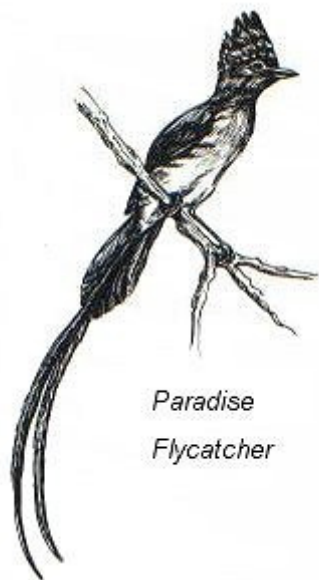
A fair start had been made in curing tobacco for export, and Longden was so interested in the prospects that for his leave he travelled to America to study the industry. While there he met and married Mary Doone, whose charm and beauty fascinated everyone. From her sophisticated Baltimore background she came to her new home at The Gwasha, where she gave superb dinner parties and made chocolates, sweets and icecreams —unknown until then in Melsetter; she was a talented musician and a fearless horse-rider. On a visit to Port Elizabeth Longden collected Mani, his present from Gungunyana whom his mother had brought up, and Mani worked at The Gwasha for some years as a handyman and cook.

Marthinus Martin continued throughout those difficult early years to lead the community and was chosen to represent them on many occasions. His education, resourcefulness, dependability, good husbandry and qualities of leadership all contributed to the high esteem and affection in which he was held by everyone. The whole district was very much saddened when, after a hunting trip with Mrs. Martin to Mozambique, he contracted a severe dose of malaria and died, aged 51, on 3rd September 1903.

At the end of the year Longden paid tribute to Martin and du Plessis, who at some inconvenience had met with him weekly on the Transport Aid Board. Martin died before the Board's work was completed, but du Plessis was a little disappointed at not receiving some practical recognition of his services and, as he was in rather poor circumstances through cattle losses, Longden suggested that a cheque for £12 be sent to him by the Government.

In planning to build a school the Managers had ground cleared and fenced, trees planted, and bricks made, and in 1904 they forwarded elaborate plans with a request for a loan of £3 000. The Government turned this down and said that building should be started on a very simple scale with the bricks on hand, but the Mission had no funds for building and, confidently counting upon a loan, had already incurred heavy expense in making bricks and ordering building material.

Accommodation for staff and boarders was in rented houses, one of which was the parsonage at £25 per annum, which was an awkward arrangement as it had to be at the disposal of the Kerkraad at Nachtsmaal times.



Classes were held in the Church, with a partition dividing it for school use. At the Handiwork Competition for Rhodesian scholars first and second prizes for plain needlework were awarded to May Hulley and Susan Coetzer of Melssetter, and May's entry won first prize in Cape Town at the South African Exhibition. Another facet of Miss Gilson's interest in the school was shown with the establishment of a football club, though it seems unlikely that she took part in this activity herself.

The physical condition in which pupils returned after a month's holiday confirmed that many parents were not providing sufficiently nourishing food for their children, and in pleading for the Government financial assistance to be continued Miss Gilson said that the school afforded the only opportunity which more than 100 children had for gaining even the simplest rudiments of education, and more important than the knowledge gained from books was the training in habits of industry and faithfulness, respect for law and order, and the wholly new ideals of life and duty. If those privileges were taken from them she felt that there would grow up in the next generation a

people inferior to their parents, who did bring with them some knowledge of civilised life, and it could not be long before there would be a vicious if not a criminal class who would be a greater expense to the Government than the cost of maintaining the school.

In spite of Miss Gilson's plea, the Government decided to reduce the boarding grant, and parents were to pay £5 a term. This brought an immediate long and detailed protest, as there was increasing difficulty in getting even the £2.10, and during the current term only five parents had paid that amount in cash for their own children. The school could not carry on with less than 20 boarders, and it was doubtful if there would be six the next term should parents be told they had to pay £15 per annum. She earnestly asked for the grants to be continued since the need for the school was so great, so much hard work had been done in laying foundations, the Mission could not do more, and the parents would not.

Longden added that it would be disastrous to allow the only school in the district to close. Miss Gilson had devoted herself heart and soul to her work, and, notwithstanding exceptionally adverse circumstances, had succeeded far beyond expectations. The hard uphill work appeared to be over and both parents and children were beginning to appreciate the benefit of the school. The difficulty was the poverty-stricken state of the farmers, due almost entirely to heavy cattle losses, and until they were able to recover it would be necessary to continue to give them aid.

The Director of Education, however, felt that parents should provide more liberally for their children's education and maintained that the grant should be reduced. The Administrator had difficulty with the problem, and eventually decided that the grant would be partially reduced, and that parents should pay £3.15 a term for boarding.

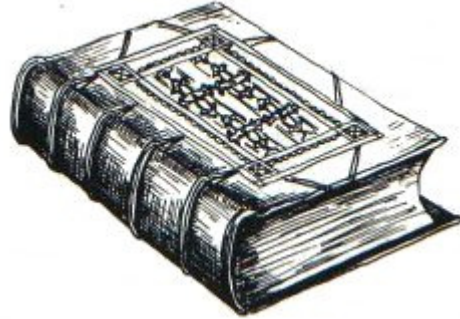
The Managers had to accept this decision as well as the fact that parents could not pay more than £2.10, and for the next few years they ran the school at a further loss, themselves standing the extra deficit resulting from the reduction of the Government grant.

J. L. Martin set up in partnership with English as Martin & English; Lands, Law and Estate Agents, Auctioneers and Sworn Appraisers, Melssetter; Telegraphic address Rocklands. The existence of their business discouraged a prospective auctioneer and law agent whom Longden put off as he was not at the time very pleased with prospects generally and thought the outlook for the future was unpropitious.

Some businesses were, however, being carried on: Hastings' General Dealer's Licence was transferred to Pritchard, who was directed to apply for a lease as the store was on Government ground; and Meikle Brothers applied for a Bottle Store Licence at the rate applicable to wayside places, but their request to pay the lower fee was not granted.

Houses were gradually being built, and when Mrs. du Preez applied for permission to erect a pole and thatch house she was told that it had been decided not to allow any buildings but those of brick and iron to be built in the township. Buildings to the value of £100 had to be erected within twelve months of the purchase of a stand.

The Dutch Reformed Church was built by March 1904 with contributions from residents assisted by the Government and £100 from the Rhodes Trustees. In March 1905 the CC. again referred to the Church as having been erected, presumably a reference to the finishing off. Hans Heyns stacked the bricks on the wagon at the brick-field and unloaded them at the site after the oxen had had the hard pull up the road. Williams made the pulpit and Neeser the pews, the organ was bought and presented by Kleyn, and Mrs. Acutt presented the Bible in memory of her father, Tom Moodie.



The Attorney-General reprimanded Longden for not having displayed a due regard for the necessity of providing hospital accommodation for prisoners in the gaol: one or two grass-roofed huts could have been constructed with a little energy and trouble by sending natives out to bring in grass and light poles even if, as reported, the grass locally had all been burnt. Soon afterwards a brick and iron gaol kitchen was built which when necessary was used as a gaol hospital, the cooking being done elsewhere.

Subchief Dzingire sent his brother Jojo and five other men to Angoniland to purchase cattle, and Meredith asked the R.M. to issue passes for them and a permit for the old muzzle-loading musket and 30 lbs. of powder and shot which they wished to carry.

The Farmers' Association complained formally about grass fires, placing the blame on the natives, but the Magistrate felt that the farmers themselves were responsible in most cases: they wished to burn areas while out shooting or to clear old grass, and set it alight; there the matter was left, and the fire spread onto a neighbouring farm.

With A.C.F. still rife the F.A. asked for a Veterinary Surgeon, but the Veterinary Department said that there would not be sufficient work to justify the Government going to the expense of substituting a Veterinary Surgeon for a Cattle Inspector.

The Melsetter Advisory Board discussed the eradication of A.C.F.; a Government Veterinary Surgeon reported on the latest phases of the disease; a letter was read giving the views of the FA.; and the Board drew up a schedule of recommendations. These recommendations were exemplified at a public meeting in 1905 when farmers' dissatisfaction was voiced at a recent Government notice regarding A.C.F. eradication. It was pointed out that local circumstances were exceptional and that regulations suitable for Matabeleland were inapplicable to this district, where oxen were indispensable for transport and nearly all the cattle were salted. (It was erroneously supposed then that cattle which had been exposed to A.C.F. infection and had not developed the disease were salted, immune or insusceptible.)

Briefly the recommendations were: No unsalted cattle should be allowed to move under any circumstances whatever. As there were not enough donkeys to supply the necessary transport, salted cattle should be allowed to travel on recognised routes, with written permission first

obtained from owners of occupied land and the N.C.'s permission for Native Reserves. Salted cattle would be branded with a distinguishing brand on authority of the Advisory Board, and while travelling had to be dipped at the first dipping tank en route and once every 14 days.

Two dipping tanks, one south of the Rusitu river and one on the north bank of the Umvumvumu, were needed. As the most prolific source of infection was from native stock, it was strongly recommended that the movement of all native-owned stock be prohibited; as the natives did not engage in transport, or work their cattle, this would entail no hardship.

Later in the year the F.A. noted with appreciation publication of a Government Notice permitting the movement of salted cattle under certain conditions, but regretted that the Government had not seen fit to prohibit all movement of unsalted cattle in accordance with the unanimous wish of cattle-owners in Melssetter. Salisbury's reply that movements were allowed under permit of unsalted cattle for slaughter and dairying purposes only was considered very unsatisfactory, and the F.A. forwarded a resolution that movement of slaughter and dairy cattle was not necessary here where there were no butchers or dairymen. The Association pointed out that the district was not likely to suffer from want of water or veld but suffered from want of cattle caused by the ravages of the disease, and again requested the Government to instruct Veterinary Officers not to issue permits for the removal of unsalted cattle within the district.

The Rhodes Trustees agreed to Longden's request for the provision of Merino Sheep for Melssetter and some were imported from the Cape. They were sprayed with Cooper's Dip instead of being placed in cattle dips in Bulawayo and it was unnecessary to have them sprayed again in Umtali, where after some delay 1 275 arrived in December 1905 and were brought to Melssetter and distributed to 22 farmers who took them on the Trustees' conditions.



Chapter 7

European births were first registered in Melsetter in 1906; those born here before then had later to depend on Baptismal Certificates when proof of age was required. At Rusitu Mission the first African woman, Mutendi a daughter of chief Ngorima, was converted, and suffered much persecution for her faith.

The possibility of erecting a Pioneer Memorial was frequently discussed, and the Rhodes Trustees were approached for the donation which Rhodes had promised and Longden described the form Rhodes had wished the memorial to take, but the Trustees replied that, had Rhodes lived he would doubtless have fulfilled any promises he made, they had to abide by the terms expressed in his will. As no money was available the project had to be shelved.



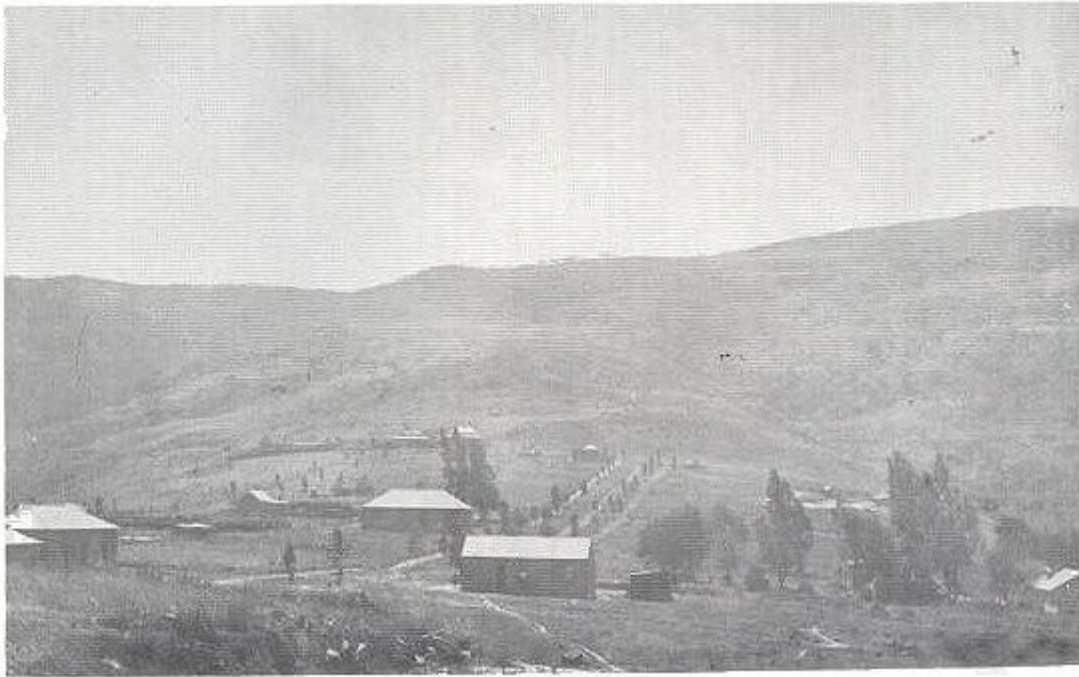
Louis Ferreira was for many years C.C.'s clerk and Court Interpreter, and lived with his wife Alice (Cannell) in the cottage 'Bethany', which he built.

A temporary gaol hospital was built with prison labour and a house for the gaoler was built for £450 about where the W.I. Hall is today: he had until then lived in a very dilapidated pole and thatch structure. Remmer as gaoler had two warders under him, but as Sergeant of Municipal Police he had no force, and Longden pressed for police supervision in the town if only to prevent the contamination of the water supply.

During Reminer's absence on leave a relief gaoler came from Umtali, who sent a bandit (as convicts in Rhodesia are frequently called), to the village with a message, with the solemn injunction that if he were not back by 9 p.m. he would be locked out! The gaoler also upon occasion gave the keys to the bandits, with instructions to rescue him at a certain hour from his night out. The end of his service came at a later date in Umtali when he was wheeled, fast asleep, through Main Street in a wheelbarrow while one bandit shouldered his gun.

Football was a popular pastime and a regular feature of Nachtmal weekends. At first it was soccer, later rugger, played 'iust below the village green, and enjoyed by both spectators and players. John Martin was the Country goalkeeper in matches against the Town, and wore khaki trousers, braces, necktie and a belt; Alfred Gifford wore a pair of three-quarter trousers, and Oxenham, Andries Bezuidenhout, Antonie, Frans Steyn and Andries Kok were among the forwards and wore shirts, over which they pulled black, coloured or striped vests.

The Rifle Club complained that most erratic shooting had resulted because the rifles forwarded were old and worn-out and the ammunition obtained through the Officer commanding the local Police was bad. The first consignment of ammo had been cordite of good quality, but latterly they had only had very old cartridges loaded with pellet powder: cartridge cases in most instances burst, very often the butt end was blown off with the case remaining in the barrel, and on one occasion the magazine of a rifle was blown clean out. The Club asked that it should be conceded the same privileges allowed to others, and be supplied with suitable rifles and good cordite ammunition. Some months later ammunition and new rifles were received, the Government grant was devoted to making a new range with improved up-to-date targets, and practice was resumed.



Melssetter 1907 from Government Building

The Farmers' Association was granted permission to hold stock fairs without taking out an auctioneer's licence or the payment of auction duty, and the Administrator approved of two stands being granted to the Association for the erection of a suitable building but there is no record that any move was made to follow up the offer. Some cases of rabies occurred during the year.

The Merino experiment had not been quite equal to expectations but had proved that a large part of the country was suitable for the production of woolled sheep. Sheep on highveld farms had done very well, but those on low-lying farms were much troubled by malarial catarrhal fever — bluetongue — and the mortality was serious. When losses continued the Rhodes' Estate was asked to bear the expense of importing sufficient serum to inoculate the sheep for farmers who could not afford the outlay, but said that it was not possible. Some of the original recipients found that they could not carry on and there was a certain amount of switching of ownership; Dr. Rose took over some and ran Merinos on Lemon Kop for over 40 years.

At the School parents still had difficulty in paying boarding fees: one term two parents only paid the £2.10 for their own children, and fees were either paid by friends or the school was obliged to take in supplies, in some cases at a loss. Miss Gilson tried hard to raise money for the school, and when on leave in England and America she appealed to friends for funds. Her success in this effort is not known, but her appeal to the Rhodes Trust resulted in a cheque for £50 after much correspondence, accompanied by the warning that it was to be clearly understood that the Trustees were not likely to repeat the grant or to send the school further assistance.

By 1906 tuition fees were payable by parents: if there were three children from one family at school, the third paid half tuition fees, and if more than three the three eldest paid full fees and the rest were admitted free.

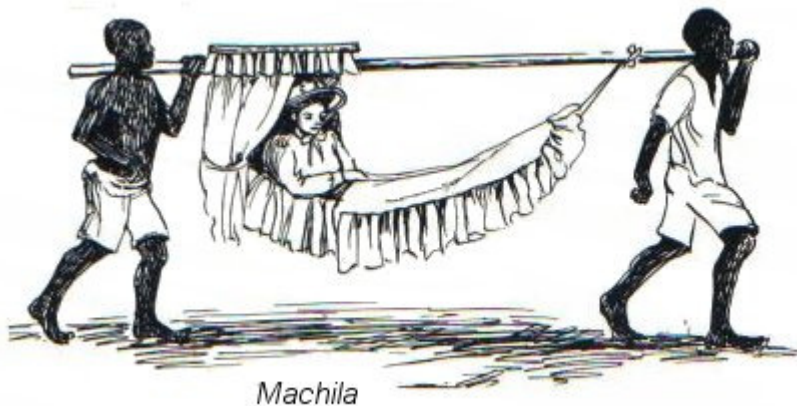
Marv Ward came to teach at the school and found it "working under serious disadvantages. of

which the most important is lack of proper accommodation. Like most Melssetter houses ours has mud floors smeared with cow manure, which sounds rather dreadful, but it soon dries and we put down reed mats and think nothing of it. Some people have linoleum, but we cannot afford such a luxury. I have a carpet on top of my mats, and in the diningroom we have coconut matting. The houses have zinc roofs and we have great difficulty in keeping out the rain, but you soon get used to the drawbacks and learn to take everything philosophically.

"The girls sleep in a big dormitory and my room is partitioned off from this. I boast a calico ceiling, but they have only rafters and zinc. The boys sleep in two small rented brick houses. The diningroom and sitting room are in yet another building, and we can just fit into the diningroom with our 20 boarders.

"The Minister is very anxious to have a Dutch teacher in the school, but as the Government will not allow Dutch to be taught during regular school hours it is a difficult question, and we have nowhere to put another teacher even if we could support one. Another lady is coming with Miss Gilson, so we shall be three instead of two."

In November the school broke up a week early on account of a case of measles. Special messengers were sent out to tell parents to fetch their children, and they all went within a few days except for one little American girl from Mount Silinda, who had to wait for her father to fetch her and who would then be carried home in a machila.



Describing her journey to Melssetter Mary Ward wrote that "At 8 a.m. I left the hotel at Umtali and, escorted by two natives bearing my small baggage and supplies on a small handcart, I walked about a mile to the outspan. The driver introduced me to my fellow traveller on the wagon, an unshaven and rather

objectionable man.

"Rather more than one third of the wagon was covered with a tent, and my mattress was placed under this on top of bags of flour, etc., which made my bed full of ups and downs. It was impossible to sleep while trekking, but we always outspanned for an hour or two before dawn which made a most welcome rest. We had a large train of natives: I had two boys, the driver two or three, and the other man had four, not counting the piccanins.

"I cooked my breakfast of bacon and tomatoes. The other traveller made scones of flour and baking-powder which he cooked in a fryingpan. He asked me to try one, and though I knew his hands would have been improved with a wash, I accepted and enjoyed it.

"The scene was peaceful and beautiful and the scenery grew more picturesque, but the road, winding between high rocky kopjes, grew worse and worse. I walked when I could, but one evening I found out what a real rough shaking is. First it seemed I was going head first through the tent over the load into the river: then as if I was about to slide into it feet foremost, and had great difficulty in keeping my feet from going through the mosquito-netting which

closed the opening of my tent. There followed such a shaking up that it made me feel as if every organ and bone in my body was playing at general post, together with a painful sensation as if a giant had taken me up to wring me out with a particularly tight twist round my waist.

"One late afternoon I walked ahead with two Police boys, one armed with a gun. We picked up friends by the way, and after a mile or two I found myself alone with twelve natives: it seemed very strange to be walking through nine-foot high elephant grass in the dark in their company. Once they all stopped and began talking, wondering how I could cross a stream. I made them stand aside and I jumped and managed to escape with one small splash, whereat they all laughed cheerfully. As the stars came out my spirits rose because I could see the Plough and Orion which my friends at home could also see. The reeds grew very high, and dozens of fireflies were sailing about them in a gentle fascinating way. We came to the outspan, where the boys lit big fires and we waited for the wagon and oxen to come up.

"Another evening I walked to the first Nyanyadzi drift: with the help of a knobkerrie, a kind of heavy walkingstick, and the assistance of a Police boy, I got over dry. At Pritchard's store, a few buildings of wattle and daub in a wire fence enclosure, dogs flew out to greet us and the owner appeared with a lantern and led us inside.

"We then crossed the Nyanyadzi seventeen times! It winds down a narrow valley, and we crossed it three times in a quarter of an hour. Travelling by wagon is no joke: in congenial company a trek of two or three days might be delightful, but I have had enough. My trek was a good one, that is, we made it in just eight days. Sometimes it takes ten or twelve and, if there are heavy rains and floods, as much as three weeks.

"Melsetter township consists of about 15 buildings including the Court House and a few huts. It is found in the NEWEST atlases, and we consider it a most superior place: surrounded by hills and facing the Chimanimani Mountains the situation is very picturesque. Not counting the boarders, there are about 26 white people, with most of the men in Government service. It is a sociable little community and I am very happy here."

Mary Ward camped with friends in an unoccupied farmhouse about six miles out. The men walked and the ladies rode donkeys, which caused Mary some anxious moments: she did not find it easy riding on a lady's saddle on a small donkey, but later found it more comfortable to use a man's saddle on a large donkey, with the right stirrup brought across to the left for a sidesaddle. In the tumbledown house, with no doors between the rooms and no glass in the windows, they picnicked very gaily. Their diningtable was a board resting on stones, which was used only in the evening, all the other meals being taken on the ground under the trees. Native boys carried out deckchairs, cushions and blankets, and those who did not like making beds out of deckchairs had grass cut early to shoot and came back about the afternoons and thoroughly enjoyed

Mary's next expedition was climbing the Chimanimanis. She and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts and two other men walked out to Rocklands and set out the following morning. "I chose the lowest and slowest mount, Esau the Dutch Church donkey borrowed for the occasion but, as he is given to shying, I was advised to take Long Legs. The mountains rose up straight before us, but we had to make many a long detour before we



Riding in the mountains

out the following morning. "I chose the lowest and slowest mount, Esau the Dutch Church donkey borrowed for the occasion but, as he is given to shying, I was advised to take Long Legs. The mountains rose up straight before us, but we had to make many a long detour before we reached the top. The morning was glorious and we rode along through beautiful country. When we camped for breakfast one of the party produced some bottles of Ross's Belfast Ginger Ale, such an odd commodity to be sold at the store in Melsetter.

"Up the rocky gorge the animals had to be led, and to add to the difficulty of climbing the whole place was covered with brushwood blackened by a grass fire. We rode again when we came to open country and then had to dismount again where the footpath was very narrow and broken — if the animals had slipped, we should have rolled many feet below.

"About 4 p.m. we entered a beautiful valley through which wound a peaceful river, and on all sides rose the topmost peaks. We made our camp among a huge group of rocks and had our lunch-supper-dinner. While the men went off to shoot, Mrs. Roberts and I retired to a secluded pan of the river and performed an extensive if not elaborate toilet, while the baboons barked most angrily. Game was scarce and only two duiker were seen all the way.

"We sang and chatted in the starlight before we retired. Mrs. Roberts and I shared a small tent and the men slept in the open.

"At 6 a.m. we rode to the bottom of the peak which we were to climb, where we left the animals to graze and continued on foot, by now in Portuguese territory. The climb was easy and near the top we came to a most glorious view with a bank of cloud in the distance. We cheerfully continued to the top, but alas, the mist had rolled up and we could not see more than a yard in front of us. We each added a stone to the beacon and then descended. I was tired when I came down, but I revived sufficiently to enjoy the walk and ride back to Rocklands, where we spent the night, and next day we all walked back to Melsetter.

"Now I look at the Chimanimanis with pride as well as pleasure. Mrs. Roberts and I are the first ladies who have ever climbed these mountains; at any rate no one here has heard of any other women, white or black, who have attempted what we did." Mary married George Rose in 1907.

It was in this year that the Managers submitted a plan for a double-storey building for the School and asked for a loan of £2 000. Correspondence passed through Departments in Salisbury with everybody very enthusiastic about the plan and its low cost until it reached the Administrator who asked for Public Works Department comment, whereupon the whole plan, including its cost, was pulled to pieces.

Consideration was given to removing the School from any denominational control, as although it belonged to the Mission practically the whole expense fell on the Government, and also it was felt that if any staff change took place difficulties might be created as the system had worked so well up to then only because of the capabilities of the headmistress.



*J.F. Markham with grandchildren Gladys, Cecil and Eva Foreman at Westward Ho
(Photograph taken by Mr Markham's daughter, Mrs Foreman.)*

In 1908 the Farmers' Association tried to stage a Show, but the Secretary for Agriculture turned down their request for financial assistance as the holding of a first Show in Melsetter that year seemed a doubtful experiment. The road to Umtali opened with such delight in 1899 was not satisfactory because of washaways and remaking each year, and other routes were investigated. Jansen surveyed possibilities over the mountains and reported that a much lighter and better road could be made, and by 1908 the cuttings road (today's Scenic road) was built as the result of his surveys, described as a vast improvement on the old road. Transport on perishable farm produce was then charged at 3d per lb.

The Customs Officer in Umtali raised the question of a road which was being completed by the Portuguese from Macequece to enter Rhodesia near Melsetter, reported to be used to a great extent by transport riders, and asked Longden if a Customs station was necessary at the point of entry as it appeared highly probable that a steady and increasing traffic could be expected. The C.C. replied that the road constructed by the Portuguese had such very heavy gradients that it was impassable for wagons, carriers had not attempted it, and no goods were being imported by that route. The Portuguese apparently hoped for co-operation on this side, as a telegram from Macequece said that Captain Andrade was ready to conclude the Chimanimani Pass road but needed assurance that Longden would arrange to build the part in his district. As a matter of interest, the telegram took 38 minutes to reach Melsetter. No big effort was made to build this road, although a track was negotiable as far as the Portuguese border post.

The projected road to Chipinga via the Nyahode valley was abandoned and a new road put through, which crossed the Nyahode about where the main road bridge is today and went through Nyaruwa and Arbroath to Lemon Kop. Jansen surveyed the country in the neighbourhood of the Waterfall mountain, and the result of his work then was the eventual construction of the road over Highlands. This difficult piece of engineering linked Melsetter and Chipinga for many years and is still known as Jansen's Hill, although a new route for part of it was found by Travers Henry with a much easier gradient, and it was reconstructed by Italian prisoners of war during the 1940s.

At the School in 1909 only nine of the 26 pupils had been there continuously for twelve months or longer, and six were newcomers. As it was known that the older children would not stay long Miss Gilson arranged the work so that they might progress as rapidly as possible, which resulted in much cross-classification and Melsetter School could not be judged by ordinary standards. For instance the most advanced pupil, Daisy King aged 15, was classed Std. IV according to arithmetic, her weak subject: in reading and other English subjects she was doing Std. VI work.

Standard I had nominally nine children but three of these, aged 17, 16 and 14, were beginners struggling with the very rudiments of reading and writing.

A loom was set up and an exhibition of spinning and pile rugmaking was a special end-of-term feature. It was hoped that the loom would mean extra income, but work was very slow as it took about three weeks for the weaving alone of a rug which was to be sold at 27/6d, a price far above that of the imported factory article, and apparently the project was abandoned.

Accommodation continued to be a problem, with the Government paying £114 a year for the scattered boarding quarters. Later in the year as a result of an influx of new families into the town the partition in the Church was removed and school was then held in a small three-roomed house, the only advantage of which was that of separate rooms for classes.

The need for a decision on the School was stressed, and the matter worked slowly through the Departments until a scheme to acquire Meredith's property was submitted and in due course adopted. It is given in some detail as the house, built about 1906, and site are still in use over 60 years later.

The property included a dwelling house of four rooms all 12' high, kitchen, pantry and a spacious passage from front to back, surrounded on all sides by an 8' verandah raised on brick pillars. All floors except kitchen boarded with cedarwood, iron roof, walls of good quality burnt brick. Good water supply from a furrow, with pure water suitable for drinking. Fruit trees and ornamental trees. Brick out-buildings for stable, boys' room and storerooms.

The minimum immediate boarding accommodation would be the girls' dormitory, bathroom and a teacher's bedroom; the boys and one teacher might still use the parsonage or school might still be held in the Church, three-quarters of a mile away with a good broad path all the way. Miss Gilson did not favour this as it would increase the difficulties of housekeeping and would result in the girls getting wet on their way to school on rainy days. The number of families in the town was small, with only four day pupils that term; town parents provided warm clothing, watertight boots and macintoshes for their children, but the farmers — the boarders' parents — did not make any such provision.

In June Miss Gilson wrote: "If only the question of the building could be decided at once, I believe we might expect an increase in attendance next term. Pardon me if I am too eager, but can the question be decided so that we can have a wire before we close on July 2nd?" It is not known whether she received the news in time, but by 17th July 1909 Meredith's property had been purchased for £1 500. No move was made that year as the necessary building could not be done: Longden was asked to get local tenders and supervise the building and said he would be pleased to do all he could, but no readymade bricks were obtainable and by the time satisfactory tenders could be received and accepted it would be too near the rainy season to attempt making bricks.

Miss Gilson's correspondence and reports are voluminous and reflect something of what she put into the school, and many people paid glowing tributes to her. She acted with extraordinary tact in a difficult situation, and was backed up strongly by the influential people in the district and was held in esteem by all the townspeople. The attitude of the town was shown when the tennis Club offered a prize of £5 to the first child to pass the Cape Examinations, a purely altruistic action as there were no children of school age then in the town. The Department had every confidence in her and the locality was very fortunate in having her. She was large-minded, of long experience, and carried the school economically and efficiently. Her ideas of education were not restricted to book learning: she aimed to improve the children in morals and manners as well, and the appearance of the children at school was in marked contrast to that of their brothers and sisters on the farms.



Mrs. Rosa Kok paid most of her family's boarding fees with vegetable supplies: her son Andries was at school for two years only, but today appreciates very deeply what Miss Gilson did for them all. She was very short and stout, and wore a long dress with a satin petticoat so that one could always hear her coming along, shrsh, shrsh. She had a hard time controlling the boys and girls, whom she tried to keep separate: she sat on the kopje, and sent the girls in one direction for a walk and the boys in another, but as soon as they were all out of her sight they met together and kissed and played around; on their return she would find out which boys had run after girls and punish them.

Young Mike Kok was a naughty little chap. Miss Gilson kept a sjambok in a cupboard, and once

when she wanted to cane him she sent him to the cupboard and said:

"Mike, look in there and you will find something that will make bad boys good." He looked all round, but apparently found nothing. When Miss Gilson said: "Can't you find anything?" Mike replied: "No, I can't find God. He's the only one that can make bad boys good." He got away with that!

Farewell Roberts recalls that everyone loved Miss Gilson, and he still owns a copy of "King Arthur and His Knights" which she gave him.

Towards the end of 1909 it was decided that the Government would take over the school and that there should be a reorganisation of staff, and the arrangement with Mount Silinda Mission was terminated shortly afterwards.

Mary Rose's brother, Jim Ward, came with his wife Amy and small son on their way to make their home in Chipinga. "We left Umtali at 7 o'clock in a four-wheeled cart covered with a dilapidated canvas, just made to fit four passengers. Mrs. Longden came with us and so we got well acquainted by the time we got here. She is rather on the huge side and took up plenty of room.

"The road is supposed to be much better than it used to be, but it's like a switchback with ruts and stones all over it. Six mules pulled the cart and trotted whenever possible, and we all had to hold on like grim death.

"We outspanned at 12 o'clock and made tea and lunched. Amy was a little nervous when we crossed the rivers, but little Jimmy was highly delighted when the mules went through the water. It was very hot and dusty and we were very glad to get to the Dutch farm house half way where we stayed the night. We had boiled goat and mealie 'stamp' and heavy bread with good butter and new milk, which soon took the edge off our appetites. It is unusual for the postcart to bring so many passengers and there is only one bedroom for visitors, so I slept on a straw mattress on the mud floor in the diningroom. We got up in the dark and started off again after having a cup of coffee with no sugar.

"As we got to the Melssetter district the road ran up mountain sides with deep cuttings: one side of the road is solid rock and the other is a sheer drop down a precipice to the bottom of the gorge. With a careless driver and awkward mules it would be a very simple matter for the whole concern to topple down the steep sides.

"George (Rose) and Longden drove seven miles out to meet us, and Mrs. Longden changed places with George who came along with us for the remainder of the journey. Mary was waiting at

the house with Elizabeth in her arms."



Dr and Mrs Rose, Elizabeth and Bridget.

Chapter 8

In August 1910 the School's new headmaster, G. E. McLeod, arrived with his wife and children Constance, Harris, Alexander and Norman.

The school moved to its new site, but the McLeods could scarcely look upon the house as exclusively their own private home: the sitting-room was the staff dining and recreation room; infants were taught on the verandah and other classes held inside the house; the school cooking was done in the kitchen and boarders fed in the house; and a teacher was accommodated.



£50 was spent on repairing outbuildings for the boys' accommodation and the girls' dormitory, with bathroom and one staff bedroom, was built. It was 60' long, 18' wide, with walls 13' high and 14" thick, and had a galvanised iron roof wooden floors and ceiling, and wooden surrounds to the sash windows. Gradually the two classrooms and another block, with boys' dormitory and bathroom, staff bedroom and school diningroom, was built, but until 1953 all food was cooked in the headmaster's kitchen and carried outside over to the diningroom in all weathers. Outside latrines (p.k's) were the only sanitary conveniences for over forty years.

A small location for African staff was erected, and school cows, bought with a Government loan of £50, were kept in outbuildings.

Although very little was ready for the school it presumably acquired a flagstaff very soon, for during 1910 the Chief Clerk asked the C.C. whether local arrangements could be made for a flagstaff at the school: a wooden pole of suitable height. fitted with pulley and cord. and

properly erected, would suffice. The Clerk needed to be advised of the estimated cost before the work was authorised.

Besides having to run a school without proper accommodation, McLeod had many other problems in some of which he was helped by the School Advisory Committee which met monthly from October 1910. He was Head of a Government School but the boarding establishment was not Government responsibility and was run by the School's Hostel Committee and apparently financed largely by McLeod himself. Boarding fees were raised from £7.10 to £8 per annum, and by 1912 they were £28, but parents had difficulty in paying them. Quite half the fees were paid in kind: fruit, vegetables, butter, eggs and sheep, which were useful when at times there were 60 boarders, but by 1914 McLeod had lost £311 since taking over, and when he asked for this to be refunded he was told that the boardinghouse was not the financial responsibility of the Government, but was given a grant of £60 for the next six months.

Another problem was hostel supervision. In deciding that the Government would take over the school it was considered a good idea to have a Headmaster with a wife to supervise the boarding establishment, but it is not clear whether payment was ever made for Rachael McLeod's years of service. In 1912 there is reference to the School Housekeeper's wage of £88 per annum, but in 1914 a housekeeper was engaged hoping the Government would pay her salary and that hope was not fulfilled.

Some of the pupils were nearly adult, and Harris remembers learning his A.B.C. standing in line with those, to him, grown men, some of whom trained oxen and did other outside work in part payment of fees. Tom Williams the woodwork instructor made miniature houses and wagons to scale so that the boys could learn the correct way.

From Zaaiplaats the du Plessis children walked to school at the beginning of every term and walked home again for the holidays. Their father, Hendrik, was away a lot from the farm doing building and transport jobs, and when he died in 1910 Mrs. du Plessis struggled on alone. Mrs. Cronwright and Mrs. Wessels put two of the girls through school, and as Hester Cecilia (Mrs. Christiaan Olwage) and her brothers grew up they attended school up to Std. III, which was all their mother could afford. To pay for their fees she did the washing and ironing for the school and supplied vegetables, the loads being carried there and back by Africans. When the children were at home they worked in the fields doing the ploughing and everything and seeing that food was available, and during termtime Mrs. du Plessis did the farming herself until she died in 1920, by when the family had finished school.

The language question caused much dissatisfaction. Ever since the original school had been started there were requests that Dutch should be taught, yet in 1913 when it was laid down that Dutch could be taught for an hour a day to any children if the parents wished it, in Melsetter only one request was received. In 1914 the Rev. Mr. Badenhorst said that he had no fault to find with the staff, but totally disagreed with the too English Spirit at the School.



G.E. McLeod and F.G. Elliott at Melssetter School, 1916

For many years annual requests were made for a railway. The Melssetter Railway Committee presented the case for its construction and was supported by the Umtali Chamber of Commerce, the Manica Farmers' and Landowners' Association and the Annual Congresses of the Rhodesian Agricultural Union.

In 1910 the B.S.A. Co. said that the construction of further railways was receiving the most careful consideration. In 1911 an eloquent plea was made on behalf of this district of vast potentialities which could not be exploited owing to the want of a railway to get produce to markets, and the London answer was that for the moment it was not possible to undertake further construction but that the Melssetter claims would always receive the fullest consideration.

In efforts to find some form of mechanical power for transport enquiries were made regarding types of traction power, and the Director of Agriculture sent catalogues of power tractions of various descriptions; he thought the crux of the problem would hinge on questions of cost and it was not clear that petrol or steam tractors would prove cheaper than ox or donkey transport.

In 1910, 57 miles of wood-pole and copper wire telegraph line was completed between Melssetter and Silinda.

From Melssetter the road to Umtali wound round through Rocklands, Constantia, Msapa up to Msaps Nek and, through heavy cuttings with a steep cliff on one side and a deep drop on the other, climbed up to 7 000, then down and across Komiek Nek with drops on both sides, and from there it turned to the right across the hills, down Rutherford's Hill, across Thom's Hope and on to Thaba Nchu.

There is a vast amount of correspondence in the National Archives detailing the difficulties which repeated themselves at least every rainy season on this narrow, winding, climbing, river-fording, slippery road. Three sections gave most trouble: the first 40 miles from Umtali with heavy sand and many deep riverbeds; Rutherford's Hill which was very steep and apt to get washed out; and the cuttings, which on the whole gave less trouble than had been anticipated: although rock falls did occur they could usually be quickly cleared.

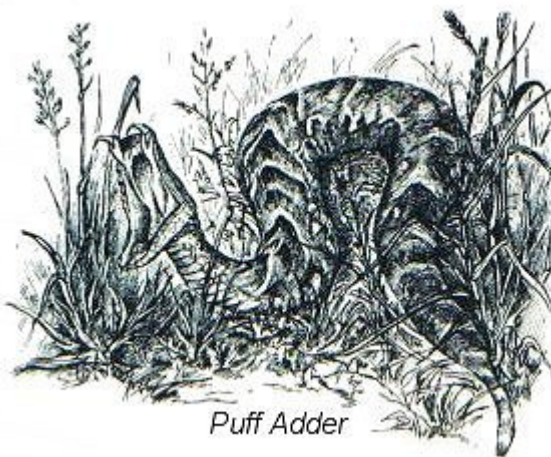
When the C.C. reported that the worst parts of the road were between the 46 and 60 mile marks, the smug Salisbury comment was that this was satisfactory and showed that the

cuttings were holding well; in the sections mentioned there was nothing to be very alarmed about.

C. H. Zeederberg Ltd., Mail Contractors, Bulawayo, gained the contract for the postcart, carrying mails and passengers, in June 1910. Their Umtali Agents were Barry & English, and in Melsetter Meikle Bros. acted for them. Complaints about the very bad state of the road flowed in from all three to the Postmaster-General, who duly handed the complaints on to Public Works Department as being responsible for the roads.

The dispute whether the roads or the vehicles were responsible for delays and breakdowns carried on steadily over the years. From Zeederberg's side came urgent complaints about the very bad state of the road; they could not guarantee punctual delivery of mails, found that their repairs account for vehicles and harness was enormous and the wear and tear on the animals was serious, and recorded some incidents.

Travelling in the dark the coach almost went over the side of a deep donga; two mules fell over, and great difficulty was experienced in extricating them by cutting the harness to pieces. A vehicle broke an axle under Rutherford's Hill, and the driver had to send 15 miles to the Road Overseer's camp for a scotchcart to take the mails and the lady and gentleman passenger on to Melsetter. The road at Thaba Nchu was particularly soft and troublesome and the Coach turned over there, the mails were very wet from immersion, and a passenger who was injured threatened to claim damages from the Government: a Road Inspector was immediately sent out, who reported that Mrs. Cashel's water (sic) was again the cause of the bad state of the road, and his recommendations for improvement were carried out.

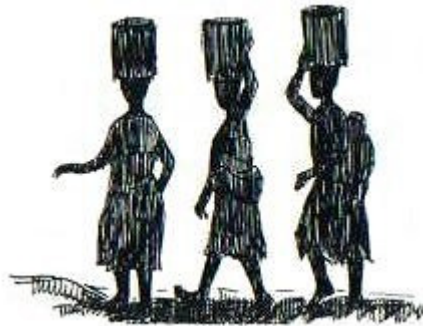


The other side of the dispute is shown in many allegations that the mailcars were not roadworthy, illustrated in a Superintendent's very detailed report on damage and immediate necessary repairs when he inspected the whole road. He travelled on the mailcart. an old Cape cart, which broke down 40 miles out of Umtali when the bush of a wheel seized; after repair the same wheel fell off the next day, but after that was repaired the coach got to Melsetter and back without further mishap. As a result of the delays the mails were 24 hours late in Melsetter and 14 hours late in Umtali on the return.

Reports on the worst parts of the road were frequently sent to Salisbury by Road Overseers on the spot, Inspectors sent specially to review the situation, and the C.C. Sometimes a Road Party under an Overseer carried on steadily with repair work, but at least once the only gang in the whole of the Eastern Districts was doing urgent work near Penhalonga when there was a crisis on the Melsetter road: in circumstances such as these the CC. or the N.C. had to recruit labour locally for temporary repairs. Finance was very short, and work was spread thinly over the whole road. In 1912 the coach fare was £3.13.6.

The town water supply was a matter of concern, and George Heyns, intending to take up residence in the town, asked about the furrow. Longden replied that the public furrow had been closed about 15 months previously owing to an outbreak of enteric, and on the advice of the D.S. the water was not allowed to flow through the township; it was impossible to say whether the sources of supply were contaminated, and it would be unwise to bring water in until the medical authorities considered it safe.

The only furrow in operation was one which had been cut to supply water to the gaol garden before the town was surveyed, and when this was done the surveyor had laid out a sanitary lane on the line of the furrow: a sanitary lane was not the proper place for a furrow, and Longden strongly advised residents not to use the water except for irrigation. If the residents put forward any scheme for providing the town with water, to be carried out at their own expense, he would consider it if there should not be any objection on sanitary grounds.



In 1912 Dr. Rose reported that the sanitary conditions were fairly good, but that the water supply was in urgent need of improvement. All water had to be carried from the streams outside by natives, who appeared not infrequently to make use of the banks of the streams when getting water, which had led to pollution and all drinking water had to be obtained at a considerable distance, and as long as water was carried contamination was likely to increase. In 1913 he commented on the excellent health of the schoolchildren, which he felt might be attributed to the water being piped to the school, and pleaded again for improvement in the town supply. In due course the water was again brought through in open furrows and flowed in them for nearly another thirty years.

In 1912 five births were registered in the town and 17 in the district, which was about equal to the average for the previous five years. Five deaths occurred, caused respectively by whooping cough, abscess of the liver, cancer, goitre and malaria complicated with heart disease. A general vaccination of natives was completed, and most Europeans were also vaccinated. Native crops were a total failure that year, and the Government had to import large quantities of grain for distribution, but good rains in December brought on the new crops very satisfactorily.

A story of Dr. Rose's practice which has remained in memories is of when he amputated Daantjie Steyn's leg. He operated on a kitchen table on Deborah's Rust in primitive conditions, attended by Cornelius Heyns and Petrus Odendaal, then C.C.'s clerk. When the doctor had cut off the leg below the knee Odendaal was left holding it, walking round the room, and he eventually approached the doctor and said: "What shall I do with this?" Dr. Rose's terse reply was: "Put it down. It's not a baby." Daantje used to say that in damp weather his missing leg ached, particularly in the toe. He used to hop on one leg from his house near the commonage boundary to the church and back.



days each month to hear cases at the
get there with an overnight stop at the rest

Farmers had been running Rhodes Trustees' sheep at a loss from deaths and heavy expenses in medicines and handling. Worms were the main trouble and most veld was intensely infested. Regular dosing and consistent moving to clean veld was expensive, and few farmers could afford to establish new stations, build sheds and kraals, and arm herds to protect the sheep from wild animals.

from wild animals.

The fact that under the agreement farmers were required to return double the number of animals issued frightened them as there seemed no likelihood of their ever being able to do this, and Longden said that if the agreement were altered so that the farmers would only have to return the number received they might be more willing to go with the experiment. Most farmers had asked to surrender sheep they still held, but Longden did not know of anyone prepared to take them whom he could recommend being given charge of such a large number.

Local roads were made by the farmers, assisted with grants when the Government thought the requests were for amounts very much less than they would have to spend in making the road themselves. They also supplied explosives and tools such as picks, shovels, wheelbarrows, axes, crowbars and drills. Many roads were considered, discussed, tried and sometimes made and sometimes abandoned.

Farmers asked for £100, later reduced to £50, for a road from Fortuna to Albany, but Jansen considered that Voorspoed could be connected more cheaply via Fortuna to the Chipinga-Melsetter road.

English was very anxious to get a road from Rocklands to Tilbury as he was receiving Government assistance for fencing his farm because of ACE. and had no road to take the material along. Residents subscribed £100 and the Government contributed £100 and sent an overseer to inspect and confirm the route. There were various holdups, including having to ask for a further £100, and work progressed slowly, but by 1913 the road was completed through Tilbury as far as Springvale: the section between Tilbury and Springfield was known, for obvious reasons, as Antbear Alley until the 1960s.

Buffelsnek road was put through, with the Government contributing £60. Buffelsnek, a name which appears to have vanished, was 4.39 miles from the Post Office, and the road connected Melsetter with the existing Roede mountain road on Greenmount. Some landowners objected to the route, but the Roads Department passed the route they considered most suitable.

In 1913 the B.S.A. Company in London considered the possibility of an aerial ropeway to Melsetter. For reports on the feasibility they approached two firms: Bleichert's Aerial Transports, and Aerial Ropeways Ltd. who had recently landed the contract in Kashmir for an Aerial Rope Tramway. The Company's Commercial Representative thought, after seeing photographs of Kashmir with scenery of the most mountainous description apparently offering difficulties far in excess of anything he had ever seen in Africa, that such a scheme might be feasible. Much technical correspondence followed, and, in order to get the necessary detailed report of requirements and terrain, arrangements were made for an irrigation engineer and an agriculturist to visit the Sabi Valley, Chipinga and Melsetter, but Longden had to advise against their being sent that year as heavy rains had started, and in December the Commercial Representative and Sir Charles Metcalfe decided that the cost of working and maintenance for such a long length of line would be prohibitive.

The B.S.A. Company stated that circumstances would not justify the construction of a railway, and the Melsetter Railway Committee asked for guarantees of better roads so that motor traffic might be started, and said that should Melsetter's isolation prohibit adequate communication with other parts of Rhodesia, the Association was determined to find an outlet through Portuguese territory by private enterprise.



A Postal Notice called for tenders for the conveyance of mail between Umtali and Melsetter, by covered cart and not less than two horses or mules, for two years from 1st July 1913. Herbert Kimpton of the Umtali Motor & Garage Company tendered successfully, planning to use mules for the first 30 miles and motorcars over the rest of the route with the journey taking twelve hours, and in considering this the P.M.G.'s only doubt was the suitability of the road for motor traffic.

Resolutions flowed in from the Farmers' Associations about the state of the road, memos were passed round Government offices considering wooden bridges constructed so that it would be impossible for carts and wagons to use them, and the Treasurer said that £800 for four light bridges would be noted for the next year's estimates.

Kimpton tried doing the whole distance with a 22 HP Enfield, carrying 400 lbs mail, 200 parcels and luggage, and five passengers. He got through, but said that until the Government did some alterations it would be impossible to run a satisfactory motor mail.

The sand was too deep for a car to grip the road and the wheels simply spun round: chains were useless and he had to proceed very slowly laying down canvas. The cross drains needed to be made easier as they were disgraceful even for wagons, light bridges were needed across the spruits for wet weather, and vleis needed to be Macadamised or Corduroyed with

poles laid lengthways across the road to enable cars to cross the washed-out or swampy stretches.

Kimpton reverted to mules only although still wanting cars all the way at any rate during the dry season. The Roads Engineer thought that a cheap separate track for cars and light traffic only could be cut, but it would be difficult to prevent wagon traffic from using it. Salisbury felt that a separate road was impracticable and a sufficiently good road was needed to meet all requirements, and the cost of approximately £6 000 from Umtali to South Melsester would be negligible compared with the cost of a railway.

Travellers admired the skill of the Cape coloured drivers as they got the coaches through in all weathers. It was a work of art driving through the cuttings where full mule and donkey teams could not pass each other. If the coach met a wagon both teams were unhitched just leaving the two wheelers, and one vehicle was steered very carefully past the other, and then the teams were hitched on again. The opportunity was always taken of a chat and a cup of coffee when any two vehicles met on the road. Returning residents were usually met on Weltevrede and rode back over Pork Pie avoiding the last tedious hours in the coach.

In 1914 Miss Mogg, a teacher at the School, took four days and three nights from Umtali owing to breakdowns and miserable mules. The driver was given a portable telephone to communicate from any point along the line, but this service does not appear to have been continued.

Consideration was given to shortening the road, and Longden recommended that it should go down the lefthand side of the Tandaai valley, which would not cost as much to construct as had the section over Rutherford's Hill which it would replace, and would give a vastly improved grade and shorten the road by about ten miles. He also recommended other deviations following native footpaths thus shortening the road, giving better grades and road surfaces, and crossing the Mpudzi river where the volume of water was quite insignificant.

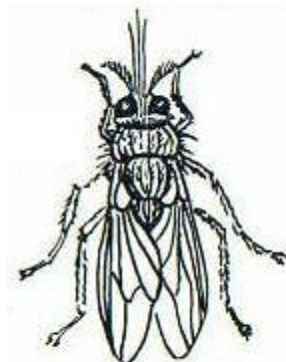
Kimpton drove to Melsester in a motor, taking from 6.30 am. till 6 p.m. to travel 92 miles, and wrote a detailed description of the trip to the Road Engineer: the worst of the sand with a bad skid in a sand drift, the appalling razorbacks and shocking road. To the top of Rutherford's Hill it was very, very bad indeed with washouts, rough stones and sand. Bolsters needed looking to, and he wondered they did not break the coach axle as they were so sudden.

From 1914 a Road Party was more or less permanently in charge of 114 miles, from 40 miles out of Umtali through to Mount Silinda and Jersey; as better routes were constantly being sought for the permanent road, heavy work was done only on sections which were known to be on the permanent route.

Recurrent repairs were needed on washaways, landslips, sodden conditions over the cuttings, drainage, removing heavy sand drifts and boulders. Antbear holes had to be filled up; river crossings battered up well with stone neatly hand placed; dangerous embankment wash put right and strengthened with stone; dangerous wheel tracks filled with good material; drifts required the bed to be raised, stones neatly trimmed up and loose stones removed; and many more repairs were listed.

Upkeep included looking after the mules. A Roads Superintendent reported that he found the mules were badly bitten by ticks and told the Overseer to get them dipped; the harness was in bad repair and two runners, two breastpieces, four sets leader harness and seven headstalls were required.

There were outbreaks of tsetse fly on the Eastern Border and a veterinary official travelled to Tarka, Vimba and on to Maronga a rubber station in Mozambique a few miles east of the confluence of the Haroni



Tsetse Fly

and Rusitu rivers. He then came back to Vimba, up the Rusitu river to the Mission, and on to Wolverhampton. On the Melssetter section he reported that he attributed the cases which had occurred to fly having ascended the Rusitu river, but he felt that the risk of a permanent invasion up this channel was doubtful as the banks were well populated and harboured little game beyond bushbuck and the farms were of an upland nature remarkably free from bush and quite unsuited to harbour tsetse.

In the township a News Club was established in 1914, the success of the efforts made during the previous five years to establish a library, which had a selection of current newspapers and magazines which arrived weekly if the coach came on time and a short daily Reuter telegram with war news, and soon there was a small but well-selected book collection at the News Club and Library, but there is no record of where it was housed.

A new Police Camp was completed, but the native police were still in huts. A Commissioned Officer was in charge, with two N.C.O.s and several troopers. The troopers patrolled on horseback accompanied by an African policeman and a pack mule to carry food and camping equipment. In 1915 Lieutenant H. Simpson was in charge, who was later killed in action in East Africa.

David Bill was Assistant Magistrate, and his son Arthur was a junior clerk; Mrs. Bill's sister married Frank Orpen who was farming at the time. Farming did not pay well so Orpen took over from Fred Wallace as Postmaster, and Mrs. Orpen was a Matron at the School who looked after the children very well. D. M. Stanley was a Law Agent from about 1907 until 1930, and took a very active part in all local matters.

When Sheba Ward (Mrs. Botha du Toit) was due to be born, her mother travelled to Melssetter by machila accompanied by her husband on horse-back and Africans carrying the luggage. Mrs. Ward stayed with Mrs. Rose, and Dr. Rose, assisted by Mrs. Cronwright, brought Sheba into the world. Travelling between Melssetter and Chipinga the Wards spent a night at a farmhouse, and when Mrs. Ward lit a candle to attend to the baby during the night she was horrified to discover the family coffins on the beams of the room they occupied!

On the farms the families were settled in. At Rocklands John Martin had married Hester du Preez and his widowed mother lived with them. The Hans Heyns were on Settler, the Bertie Remmers on Fairfield, and the Schalk Kloppers on Hillside.

A story is told of the Steyns on Greenmount, who held a service each evening at which Tante Chrissie read the Bible and the old man said the prayers. One evening as she closed the Bible Mrs. Steyn told her husband that it was time he bought her a new Bible because she knew that one off by heart from beginning to end.



Mr and Mrs M.J. Bredenkamp

Mr. and Mrs. Papenfus had come to the district in 1906 and settled on Highlands. Their son Koos remembers very clearly the shadow of A.C.F. after which restocking was a problem partly solved as a result of their having a good wheat crop when drought affected parts of the district: Africans came up from the Sabi to barter cattle for wheat, and Papenfus was able to buy some big cows and oxen at the rate of a bag of wheat for a cow and a bag and a half for an ox. Naas du Preez gave the young Koos a goat ewe and from her, at first using a local ram, he built up a small flock; later Nicklaas Swanepoel gave Koos a cow and a calf for his goats, which gave Koos his start with cattle. A.C.F. delayed any rapid building up of his herd, but in 1970 he still continues his interest in cattle on Tweelingspruit, where he and Tallie are assisted by their son Nico.

In 1913 M. J. (Oom Gallie) and Mrs. Bredenkamp settled on Uitkyk with their family, and moved later to Dairy Plot just outside the village, and Oom Gallie farmed Greenmount.

In 1914 Dr. Rose interviewed the Medical Director on the need for hospital accommodation and, at Dr. Fleming's request, wrote a memorandum stressing the lack of accommodation and the difficulties which had been experienced. He said that a small building was required containing two rooms for the treatment of patients, two for a nurse, one for kitchen, and one for office, storeroom and general purposes; with outbuildings to include accommodation for servants and sanitary conveniences. The permanent appointment of a nurse was necessary and, although at first the number of cases would be small and the institution would be run at a small loss, the nurse's salary and interest on buildings could scarcely exceed £250 per annum from which fees would be deducted.

When Dr. Fleming forwarded the memo to the Chief Secretary he, surprisingly in view of the fact that the need for hospital facilities had been stressed certainly since 1899, said that this was the first demand for an institution of that sort in that place and he had no knowledge of the need for such a building. He thought that little use would be made of it and as there were no funds on that year's estimates to meet the Expenditure, he suggested the matter be referred to the Magistrate for expression of opinion, and if necessary some provision might be made the following year.

The Acting C. C. supported the project. He said that the population of the district was 800 Europeans and 30000 natives and was steadily increasing, and that hospital treatment was often very necessary. He quoted a recent instance of a patient suffering from gunshot wounds who had had to be sent by postcart to Umtali hospital. He pressed for a maternity hospital as a start, as women came into the town every year to be confined and there were great difficulties in procuring accommodation and nursing services.

The farming community was fairly prosperous and the new settlers were as a rule men of some substance, and people felt entitled to more of the advantages and conveniences usually associated with close settlement and great numbers, although the earlier lack of proper medical treatment had been accepted as a hardship inseparable from pioneers' lot. The CC. spoilt his case with the recommendation that the £1 650 allocated to school buildings would be better spent in providing a small hospital and a pure water supply for the township, and a curt letter from the Secretary said that the funds voted for school purposes were not available for a hospital.



Chapter 9

In 1915 the Government took over the School hostel, an Assistant Matron was appointed, the fees were raised to £36 per annum, and boarding grants were allowed and Bills or Promissory notes accepted from parents for fees, but still the system did not run smoothly and only 50% of the children in the district were being taught in school.

In spite of difficulties, with lively young teachers at the school, tennis parties were popular and were often followed by supper and a singsong and dance, and the School had an excellent library of standard authors rewritten in simple form.

A letter in the Rhodesia Herald criticised the running of the Melsetter Postcart, particularly on the first 43 miles and the state of the mules. In reply Kimpton as the Mail Service Contractor welcomed the correspondence, hoping that it would cause the matter to be enquired into and that there would be at least two decent-sized road parties soon on this so-called road. He went into great detail, pointing out that until a few months previously the coach had never been late and the mules had been fat and fit although they had been on the road since June 1913: the shocking state of the road now compelled him to use ten mules instead of six as previously, he had in the last four months lost 15 mules, and the first 43 miles took eleven hours instead of seven.



Lobelia Decipens

All transport animals were crying out to those in authority: the Road Engineer had recently said that to 60 miles out there was no road left, and Kimpton asked if it were possible for a mule to be properly treated when he had to pull on a road that even the Engineer admitted had ceased to be worthy of the name. From Umtali to Silinda 130 miles were practically impassable and the other 40 needed to be kept in repair; to do all this the Government allowed one white man, two carts and, including drivers and cookboys, twenty natives, which Kimpton felt was about as much good as trying to clean out a stable with a table fork. Soon afterwards he gave up the mail contract, and Zederbergs took it on again.

The Controller of the Defence Force wrote that it was the intention of the Administrator to make a tour from Umtali to Mount Silinda, using Motors, and asked if the roads might be attended to where necessary. The reply was that the road party was working towards Melsetter and would go on to Mount Silinda, but it was doubtful if it would be beyond Chipinga by the date mentioned.

By this time Melsetter had a telephone exchange with four local subscribers.

In 1915 Longden retired and went to live on Sawerombi West where the old Umtali road passed his homestead. As no work had been done on it for about ten years it was practically impassable but was his only means of communication with Melsetter. He put his section in order, and on the Commonage portion the road was put in order with prison labour free of charge to the Department of Mines and Roads.



Left to right: Dr Rose, A.D.Olwage, J.A.Heyns

Finding a replacement for Longden after his twenty years as Melsetter's Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate was not easy: the First World War was on and there was some anti-British feeling among a few of the people, A.C.F. was still hampering farming progress, and there were other problems. The choice fell on F. G. Elliott, then Native Commissioner at Matopos, to be C.C., R.M. and N.C. at Melsetter.

In Cape Town in 1916 his daughter Madge was looking forward to leaving school and having a gay life in Bulawayo, but she was sent for to keep her mother company in Melsetter, so far away from everywhere. For the first two years the Elliotts lived at The Gwasha and moved to another house which Elliott bought when the Longdens came back to the village.

The schooling problem was acute and the number of children receiving no education at all was a matter of concern, so the Government implemented a scheme whereby any farmer could apply for a Government-paid teacher if he could guarantee to have ten children attending school and could provide accommodation for the teacher and a classroom.

To Voorspoed Farm School in 1916 came Joey Grobler from her teacher-training course at Stellenbosch. She travelled by train to Umtali and by coach to Melsetter, where Constance and Harris McLeod escorted her up to Melsetter School: she sat on a Madeira chair tied on to the platform of a four-wheeled cart with no sides, and the children walked on each side urging the donkey up the hill.

Early next morning she set out on a pony lent by Elliott, accompanied by Dons Lotter on horseback and a boy carrying her portmanteau and rugroll to which her tennis racket was strapped, although she was warned that there was no level ground where she was going.

They rode on a footpath to the Nyahode drift where they joined the road. At Lemon Kop, which Joseph Olwage was managing for Dr. Rose, they off-saddled and had lunch, and at Heathfield had coffee with the Kleyns. They dismounted for the steep descent to Voorspoed and led the horses, and with knees shaking and calves aching reached the Lotter homestead. Mrs. Lotter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. P. R. Botha, lived nearby.

The Lotter's house had a thatched roof, no ceilings, and floors smeared with cowdung; the schoolroom, with desks, blackboard, platform and chair, was about five yards from the homestead. The pupils, from Infants to Std. IV, were Danie and Fanie Bredenkamp, Lavina and Jan Schonken, Lina and David van der Linde, George Bezuidenhout, Joubert Kleyn, who all boarded with the Lotters, and Doulina, Johanna and Herculaas Botha.

Once on a walk Joey picked beautiful maroon flowers from a creeper with yellow beans, and when she got back to the house to ask the name Mrs. Lotter slapped her hand so hard that she dropped the flowers, and told her to rub her hand in the sand, wash with hot soapy water, and rub lard well in. In spite of this the hand swelled and was very painful, itchy and blistered: and Joey had learned not to touch buffalo beans.



*Breakfast at Constantia beside the coach:
G. Gifford, Miss Grobler and Miss Watson*

Primitive but civil native women from across the Portuguese border came to hoe the lands, and worked all day for a cup of salt or sour milk which were scarce luxuries. The married women were naked to the waist, with a softly tanned skin apron in front to their knees, and a wider one at the back reaching to their ankles; they had big holes in the lobes of their ears, where they had a cartridge case or a piece of reed for their snuff; and pregnant women put red clay in

their hair and twisted little tufts to stand up. Unmarried girls wore very thickly pleated skirts to their knees: about a yard of navy cloth was tied across the top of their bodies, under the left arm, with a knot on top of the right shoulder. The piccanins were stark naked, with strings of beads round thighs and ankles to keep evil spirits away.

The men wore only a skin drape, and when cold they wore a soft skin sleeveless jacket.

Lotter went on a three-week trip by donkey wagon to Umtali with coffee beans, rolls of chewing and smoking tobacco, eggs and fowls, and brought back sugar, tea, rice, flour and other groceries. The day after his return the Lotters went across to the Bothas, and Miss Grobler was in her bedroom when she heard a noise and saw a black hand with a dinnerknife trying to open the window latch. Very scared, she lifted the short curtain and said: "What do you want?" The would-be intruder was startled and ran off, and she walked across to the Bothas'. Mr. and Mrs. Lotter came back with her, and Lotter punished the boy: it transpired that he had planned to steal as he knew Lotter had brought back prized items like salt and sugar and soap. Through Bland's small store on Bland's Folly, Joey bought a very handy tiny revolver for £3.10 with .22 ammunition.

Mr. and Mrs. Bredenkamp were very kind and sent an extra donkey for her to visit them at Uitkyk when the boys went home for the weekend, and she visited Mr. and Mrs. Jansen at Fortuna and made friends with the du Plessis at Clearwater. She met Fred Delaney, to whom she got engaged, and his friend Cliff Vice who went with Tom Ferreira on a big game hunt in Mozambique, contracted blackwater fever, and was carried in a machila to Mayfield where he died.

Towards the end of the last term Condry, Inspector of Schools for Manicaland, came on a cold wet drizzling day on horseback. He was not satisfied with the accommodation provided, and Voorspoed School closed at the end of the year and Miss Grobler was transferred.

In school holidays she came back to Melsetter, and once during the rains at a landslide in the cuttings a road party was clearing debris when the coach arrived. The passengers dismounted and the leader unhitched four mules and tied them to a tree. He then led the two wheelers with the coach almost on the edge of the precipice, while the passengers walked behind watching anxiously as it seemed the coach would - tumble over, but everything went well, the mules were hitched on again, and they carried on safely.

On a visit to Clearwater Fred rode a mule and Joey a donkey, with a boy to carry the luggage. They slept at Cattle Inspector Powell's camp, where Ferguson the D.V.S. was also staying, and next morning went by footpath through Merrywaters.

Highlands Farm School opened in January 1917 with ten children including two who walked every day from and back to Rookwood. All the pupils, of whom the eldest was 21, were practically beginners when the school opened. When Condry inspected the school he found that their reading and recitation in both languages and their writing showed that they had worked diligently, sums were done neatly and accurately on slates, they were very good at mental calculations, a marked improvement was noticeable in their general deportment, and they were anxious to learn and seemed to appreciate the effort that had had been made to bring education within their reach but the school lasted for one year only as it was not possible to maintain a sufficient number of pupils to keep it open.

There were fresh outbreaks of A.C.F., and an extensive spread resulted in 1 149 cattle deaths in the whole district during 1916. Early in 1917 60 farmers at a special F.A. meeting asked the Government to take steps to eradicate the disease: in their opinion the spread was due to ineffective and inadequate measures taken after the outbreak on Nooitgedacht in Chipinga in 1914.



Dr Rose, C.E.Orpen, D.Bill, F.Ferguson

The meeting expressed great dissatisfaction and a total lack of confidence in the organisation which, it was alleged, had not materially improved the position and had pursued no definite and consistent policy, although it had had a long period of absolute and unfettered control and the expenditure of large sums of public money. Stockowners had given every assistance in eradication measures and Melsetter farmers had been the first in the Territory to adopt compulsory dipping, yet many farmers were on the verge of financial ruin and the position was very serious.

The Chief Veterinary Surgeon considered that the measures taken at Nooitgedacht were adequate: from a study of the schedule of mortality it was evident that infection was deposited considerably more than a year before an outbreak was determined, and it was probable that the spread was due to infection disseminated before the existence of A.C.F. at Nooitgedacht was suspected, and that there was no connection between the outbreak there and the one at Springfield as the intervening country was impassable for cattle.

The shortest time in which, in most favourable circumstances, A.C.F. could be stamped out was twelve months, and Melsetter was the biggest proposition the Department had had for ten years. A little later he said that the recrudescence was not serious; he had expected it, as in Melsetter it not infrequently happened that several successive dippings were rendered practically ineffective by constant rain.

Prinsloo lost all his cattle, his wagon stood abandoned near the homestead, and he had difficulty in feeding his family: when he visited Naas du Preez he saw a ham hanging in the rafters and immediately exchanged his wagon for it. About 1917 John Meikie bought Albany for a small wagon and mixed span of bullocks and heifers, and the Prinsloos moved out of the district.

In 1917 attention was drawn to the exceptional advantages which the district offered for the establishment of soldier settlers provided a railway were built, but the Government said curtly that nothing further could be contemplated.

After the years of battling, with hopes being raised at times, Melsetter accepted the fact that the Government would not build a railway and Melsetter and Chipinga farmers decided to take matters into their own hands and to build their own from Chipinga to join the Beira railway. Work was begun and the track was levelled for some distance, the layout of the line may still be seen on some Chipinga farms and on Uitkyk, which appears to be as far as it got before the whole idea was abandoned.



Breaking camp

There was a road from Chipinga to Wolverhampton for vehicular traffic and from there a bridle path had been cut through Vermont and Ngorima Reserve to Bloemhof where it joined Meikles road, today's Nyahode road. Farmers repeatedly asked the Roads Department to make a wagon road along the bridle path, and in 1917 a road party spent three months making the road as far as Knutsford. The financial position did not permit of the employment of a separate road party and it was proposed to do a portion of the work each year until the remaining seven miles were completed, but the road was not finished in spite of continued appeals.

Farmers asked for the Nyahode road to be proclaimed a public road to Bloemhof, and Longden objected to the track crossing the Nyahode river below the homestead on his farm Nyaruwa and through his lands on Nyhodi. He had no objection to its passing through Nyaruwa to connect with the Melsetter-Chipinga Road.

Louw Kleyn worked on the road from Lemon Kop through Heathfield towards Voorspoed, where a section with bars of rock and boulders made wagon traffic very difficult.

The Secretary for Mines & Roads said that there should be two road parties for Melsetter, one to work continuously between Umtali and Melsetter, and the other from Melsetter southwards, but funds did not permit of this.

Dr. and Mrs. Rose moved to Lemon Kop, from where the doctor carried on his practice with weekly visits to Melsetter and other calls when required. Some feeling of the isolation was brought home to a later-comer who told Mrs. Rose in rather an aggrieved tone that she had

not been to Umtali for nine months, and Mrs. Rose replied: "My dear, there was a time when I did not get to Umtali for nine years ."

English and Longden owned vast acreages, and they thought up a scheme for selling large tracts to wealthy businessmen in America and England. Besides their extensive Melsetter holdings they owned land in the Umtali district, where most of their Ranching Scheme was directed. It has little direct bearing on Melsetter, but gives an insight into their activities.

They submitted details of the Scheme to the B.S.A. Company and invited it to join in with some of its unalienated land, which they proposed to buy to round off their boundaries and create Blocks to be run as individual propositions but under one management; Company prices would have to be low, bearing in mind the indifferent character of the land and the fact that there was no probability of its being applied for by intending settlers. They asked for a six months' option to make sure that they would be able to resell.

The Directors of Agriculture and Land Settlement said the Scheme was sound and deserving of encouragement and that English and Longden could include certain farms at 5/ 6d per morgen. The Commercial Representative recommended that the options should be given but it would be preferable for the Company not to join in the Scheme.

English owed £310 for quitrents, some of it dating back to 1911, and the account had been placed in solicitors' hands for legal action if necessary; Longden had recently paid a portion of arrear quitrents, but still owed about £90 for 1913-1917. The London Directors agreed to the option being given provided that English and Longden paid up arrear quitrents, furnished proof of being able to secure adequate capital to develop the land, and undertook the necessary stocking conditions.

The option price was brought down to 4/ 6d per morgen, but the partners did not manage to sell the blocks as they had hoped, and renewed the option every six months until the end of 1919. They continued to be hopeful of selling, but met with various setbacks and the scheme fell through. English still planned to sell land, and set up in Umtali on his own as Auctioneer, Sworn Appraiser, Land & Estate Agent. Livestock and Produce Dealer, and advertised for sale over a million acres of farms and blocks of land suitable for ranching.

Chapter 10

1918 started with exceptionally heavy rains. In January a road Overseer, held up between two unfordable rivers, got a message through to Umtali with an African policeman on patrol that he was repairing washed-away drifts so that vehicles could get through, but suspected that the roads were very bad beyond them. Around his camp six donkeys and three mules had died of exposure.

Marie, daughter of H. D. Martin (Mrs. Hack), left Melsetter for school in Bulawayo. The night before they left it rained steadily, but the morning dawned fair and, with servants carrying her scoff box and tin trunk, she went to the market square to board the coach. Nearly all the villagers were there as the weekly arrival and departure of the mail-coach was a big event, not lightly to be missed. Six passengers could be carried in two rows of three facing one another with knees almost touching, but as there were only four Marie, Connie McLeod, Mr. Lenthall and a Post



& Telegraphs technician — they travelled in great style and comfort. Luggage and mailbags were secured to the back of the coach and covered by a tarpaulin. Final goodbyes were said, they took their places, the Cape coachman mounted his high seat, his assistant leapt up beside him, and with whip cracks, the clatter of hooves and a blast from the bugle, they were off.

The team was fresh and the pace brisk as the coach rounded the shoulder of Pork Pie and past Rocklands. Then came the long, heavy pull up and yet up, till the nervous preferred not to look outside to the awful depths below. Rounding sharp bends the leading mules had to keep to the extreme edge of the narrow road, and clods flung up by their hooves dropped sickeningly out of sight. On and on, then down the impossibly steep pass at Komiek Nek, round to Steynsbank and a fresh team of mules, and an opportunity of stretching legs and having tea and a bite. The new team had a long haul up and round to Rutherford's Hid, and then down the valley, across the Umvumvumu, and on to the Half Way huts where they spent the night.



Melsetter villagers seeing off the coach

The mountains, with very real hazards in those wet conditions, were behind them, and ahead was comparatively uninteresting country, with minor ups and downs though with large rivers to be forded. Next morning, due in Umtali that afternoon, they were wakened by the bugle to a sodden world.

They found the Mpudzi river in flood, but after a short delay the water appeared to have subsided, so the coachman said that

with the fresh team ready there they should be able to cross. With brakes locking the back wheels and mules struggling to keep their feet on the slippery surface, the steep slope down to the ford was negotiated. Halfway across the river disaster struck. A wall of water swept through the coach, carrying downstream nearly all their belongings and the helpless mules, hastily cut free by the quick-thinking driver. One poor beast was drowned, but the others struggled to safety some distance away.

There they were: four fare-paying passengers and two Zeederberg employees, soaked to the skin and perched precariously on the rocking, teamless coach in midstream. Connie, dressed incongruously in smart coat, new hat and brown gloves, swam back, battling bravely through the waves.

Africans came from the coach stables and formed a human chain from bank to coach, back along which they all struggled to safety. A fire was made and they dried themselves as well as possible. The position was not good: nearly all their belongings had gone, they had no food, and learned that return to Melsetter was impossible as the road behind was cut by another stream, normally a trickle but now a raging torrent. They got in touch with the Newnham family who were camped close by and soon exhausted their limited food supplies. Before the adventure was over they were eating crushed mealies kept at the coach station for the mules.

The Post & Telegraphs man had saved a portable telephone from the flood and climbed a telegraph pole, attached the instrument, and got news of their plight to Melsetter. Elliot organised teams of bearers to bring food, but they returned to report failure, and finally the Martins' faithful old servant, Bye-and-Bye, managed to reach them with a box of supplies.

In order to rescue the Newnhams and the coach party the Umtali Magistrate sent out a trolley and oxen for which, owing to A.C.F. restrictions, a special permit had to be obtained, and also sent mealie-meal and flour for the Overseer. The road was washed out in many places some ten and fifteen feet and several landslides had blocked it, and all traffic was suspended.

In Umtali Marie was taken in by Mr. and Mrs. Jim English and was looked after by their motherly housekeeper Miss Lettie Kloppers. The 100-mile journey had taken a week instead of two days.

Marie had hoped that on reaching civilisation her troubles would be over, but she was involved in a train accident near Rusape where a culvert had been washed away. Eventually she reached Salisbury, was re-equipped by her sister, and reached Eveline Girls' High weeks late, and her trunk reached the school about a month later.

It was weeks before the next coach got through to Melsetter. The carriers swam the flooded rivers with mailbags on their heads, and exchanged bags halfway; letters only were carried, newspapers and parcels posted in Salisbury in January reached Melsetter in April. Transport wagons were held up, provisions became scarce, and drink ran out altogether; some residents suffered badly from thirst and did not enjoy being teetotalers, and the first coach to arrive bringing a cargo received a tremendous welcome.

During February the C.C. telegraphed successive overnight high rainfalls, and said that if it continued to rain as never before even runners would not be able to get through. The roads were everywhere impassable for vehicles, and it was useless spending money trying to mend them until the weather cleared.

The official figures, from 1st November 1917 to 31st March 1918, were 94.25" in the township, which was less than in many other parts of the district. There was serious mortality among stock as young cattle and donkeys died in considerable numbers, and sheep and goats died in hundreds.

During March all official correspondence was carried out in very long telegrams, and the C.C. appealed for a road engineer to come and direct operations or tell him what to have done. Gangs worked on sections of the road to make them passable, and the Overseer,



Mr and Mrs Longden

again short of food and imprisoned between unfordable spruits, dealt with severe damage.

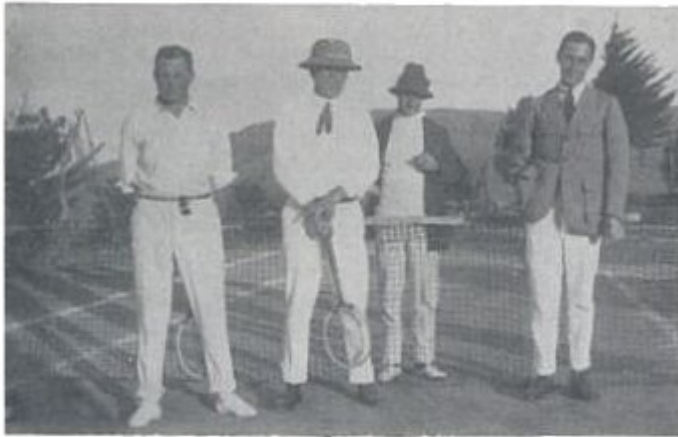
By 16th April private conveyances had come through and the coach service started again soon afterwards, but it was months before more than urgent temporary repairs could be done to the road.

The road through Chipinga to Mount Silinda was a Government responsibility, but it got little attention and was mostly in a shocking condition. In 1918 a gang repaired some of the damage done at the beginning of the year, and the Nyahode drift was described as not being able to stand a rainstorm as it had been built with very light material and had no batters whatever.

Baboons were very troublesome, and hunts were arranged under the control of the N.C., who supplied natives to help when necessary. Lee-Enfield ammo was issued free, with unexpended rounds being returned to the N.C.; ammunition for other rifles and for shotguns expended during a hunt was paid for on application to the C.C.

A quantity of wool, several hundred bags of wheat, and a little dairy produce were sent to market, but Melsetter was at the time affected by the general depression after the War.

As there was a spell with no further deaths from A.C.F., farmers, merchants and other residents urgently requested that the quarantine restrictions be lifted to allow ox transport between Melsetter and Umtali. Donkey transport was unobtainable, no mealies or grain for native food could be bought locally, the farmers were asking prohibitive prices for wheat, and necessities for the European population were becoming scarce. Later in the year restrictions were partly removed, and an Imperial Cold Storage buyer bought some 2000 head of stock.



Scallan, Elliott, McLeod, Hughes-Halls

In spite of drawbacks, advances took place in the village and day-to-day life carried on. Lethbridge retired from the Police and took over the house in which Meikles' Managers had lived (today's Hotel cottage), and opened the first fully licensed hotel, a great boon to travellers. Later several bedrooms were added, and a large stable was erected capable of accommodating a dozen horses.

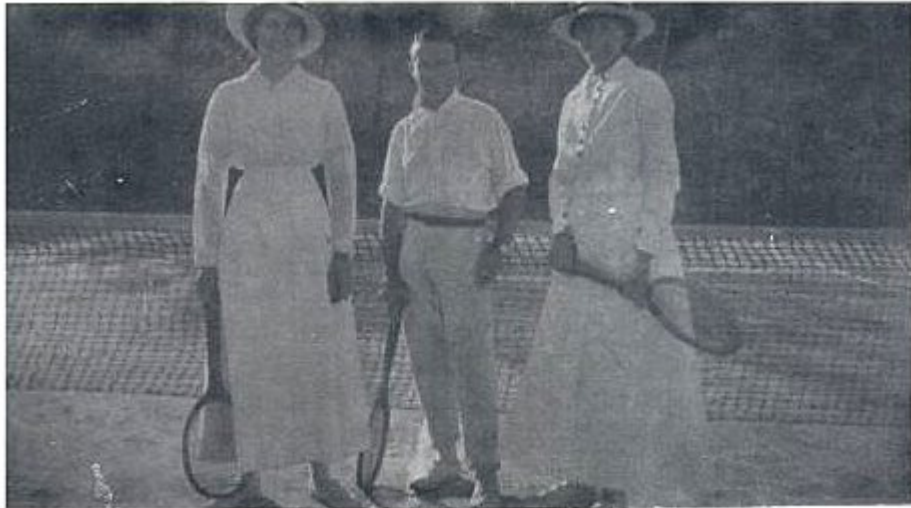
The C.C. reported that a healthy sign was the erection of a large and commodious store: the stone building which still stands sturdily today, built at the instigation of

John Meikle. Meikle Brothers had had a General Dealer's certificate since 1911, the first issued by the Melsetter Licensing Board. The building of the store, supervised by a contractor, involved many residents: the stones were laid by Daantjie Steyn, Stoffel and Schalk Kloppers, Tom Williams and Barnie Marais, and the stones were lifted to the top of the wall by a small crane. Karl Neeser did the carpentering with timber most of which Andnes Kok cut in the Nyamarirwe valley in the Greenmount forest: after felling a tree, he sawed it into 18' lengths and rolled each length onto the sawpit alongside, and with the help of two boys got the pieces cut through, taking about three weeks to cut one tree.

C. L. Mulling managed Meikles' Store assisted by George Gifford, who also acted as Court Interpreter upon occasion. After Mulling came Fred Taylor, later of Taylor & Nisbet and of Manchester Park, which he left to the nation: today's Vumba National Park. Carey Bland was the next manager.

There were small stores on many farms, and the other store in the village was owned by F. E. Cronwright. At that time Mr. and Mrs. Cronwright lived at Jersey farm and his Melsester store was managed by H. D. "Leggy" Martin, no relation of the pioneer Martins, who was assisted by Mike Kok and Abraham Olwage. The African side of Cronwright's business was run for many years by Frans Majeji who farms today at Biriwiri T.T.L.

Store managers got £15 a month, with goods at trade prices. Farm managers got £10 to £15 with house, free use of land required, a percentage of increase and in some cases free riding horses. Farm labourers got 15/- a month, cookboys 20/- to 30/-, houseboys and gardenboys 15/- to 20/-, all with food and quarters.

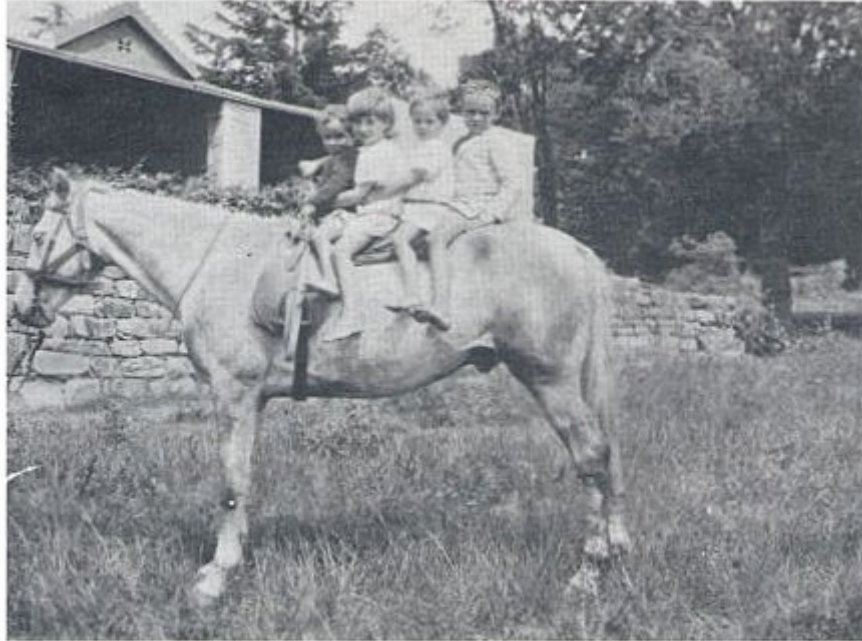


Madge Elliott, Baker, Mrs Lenthall

Government officeboys and storekeepers drew 35/- a month and provided their own rations. In 1920 the C.C. applied successfully for an increase of 5/- a month for employees with a certain length of service, as all were married with families, and a paraffin tin of meal cost 5/-, which was altogether beyond their means. The cost of a prisoner had risen to about £45, with discipline over £28 and maintenance £16.

There was no butchery but game, especially bushbuck, was plentiful. Chickens were 9d each from the natives. Farmers sold sheep for 30/- each, which were killed and dressed by house servants; a meat saw and chopper were normal kitchen equipment. Word was sent round when a farmer occasionally killed a young ox, and the villagers went out to the farm and got a big piece of meat which they then cut up as best they could; beef was such a treat that nobody minded how far they went to get it.

Madge Elliot was glad to be taken on in the Office when Arthur Bill joined the forces, as life was very dull for the young; social occasions were rare but enjoyed by all when they did occur.



Basie, Miems, Rosa and Tokkie Kok on Silver

Mrs. Bertie Remmer was the character of the district, much loved and very good to the young; all had a healthy respect for her too, and from the CC. down everyone did what they were told very quickly when she talked. She objected strongly to the imposition of wagon licences, and was highly incensed when her wagon was impounded for not having a licence. However, when life got particularly dull a young policeman would say: "Ma, what about a party?"

Mrs. Remmer always said: "Oh, you boys , but never said no, and to the parties in her house the young all made their way on foot, carrying hurricane lamps unless there was a moon, from the School, the Residency, the Police Camp and from below the hotel. Music for dancing was provided by concertina and mouthorgans and by Mrs. Remmer's piano, played by young policemen or by Mrs. Stanley who had been a music mistress or by the school teachers or one of the others, as most could play a little. When Mrs. Remmer said: "That's enough now. Time to go home", off they all went.

Her piano was borrowed for occasional dances organised by the War Fund Committee, when it was carried to the Courthouse and back by the prisoners. Everyone went to all the Olwage weddings and danced all night in a tiny little room with the dust rising; their harmonium was used for hymns on Sunday and dance music on other occasions.

At Nachtsmaal the village buzzed with excitement for a few days. Farmers and their families came from far and wide, bringing everything to make themselves comfortable: bedsteads, chairs, tables, and even chests of drawers and sideboards. They drew up their wagons and pitched their tents on vacant stands.

Religious services were held, and various committees met and the Young People's Debating Society held their meetings. In the evenings groups of people, young and old, gathered round the campfires, singing to the concertina and mouthorgan, telling stories, and generally enjoying themselves. Mrs. Elliott and Madge called on each family, and were always received with great kindness and genuine hospitality; they had everyone back to tea in their home, and made many

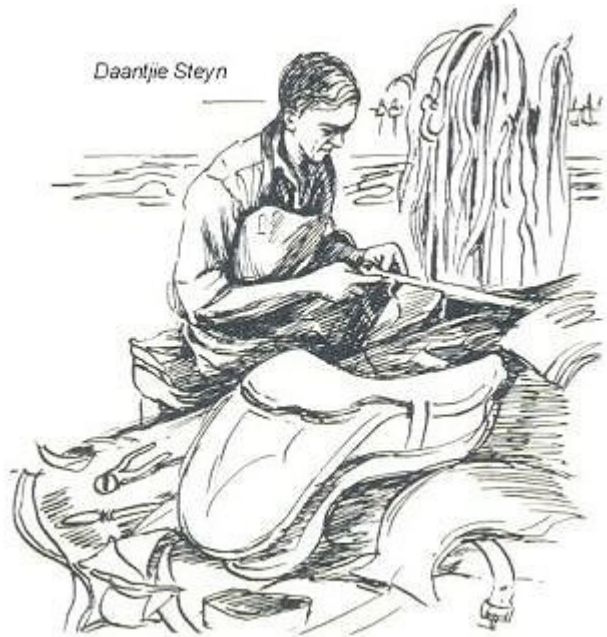
good friends in spite of the fact that a lot of the older people did not know a word of English and the Elliotts knew no Afrikaans.

The highlight of the December Nachtmaal was a bazaar to raise funds for the Church, and the townspeople were glad of the opportunity to stock up with high quality supplies of bottled fruit, jams and konfynt, chutney and jellies, delicious homemade bread and cakes, fruit, vegetables and needlework. The meat stall always did a roaring trade: boerewors, mutton, live sheep, ducks, turkeys and beef were in great demand, and what could not be used immediately was put into the brine tub.

The Elliotts had all visiting Government officials to stay with them and also the Chipinga and Mount Silinda people on their way through. Even Commandant Luon from Espungabera had to come through Melseetter to get to Beira. Scotchcarts with their high wheels, drawn by four spirited horses, were useful over uneven terrain. The front seat across the cart normally sat two, and behind the shared backrest there was another seat with the passengers facing backwards — terribly sickmaking for those not accustomed to it.

The children all had to help with household chores as soon as they were old enough to be allotted tasks, but when those were done their life was delightful and carefree, with few rules and regulations. The boys enjoyed shooting with catapults or, if lucky enough, with a pellet gun, and there was regular riding in the open countryside on donkeys, and occasionally there was the delight of having a horse to ride. The young Koks visited their grandparents at Belmont, two or more of them mounted on their horse Silver.

Memories include visits to Daantjie Steyn, the village cobbler, saddler and dentist. A donkey ride to the dentist was unpleasant, with a cold head-on wind aggravating the aching tooth; once the powerful Steyn had his young patient in his grip there was no escape until the offending tooth was extracted, and there were anxious moments while the patient watched carefully to see that the correct implement was selected from the mixture of cobbling, leatherwork and dental tools on the work-bench. Daantjie made good boots which lasted well but imparted to the wearer's feet an unmistakable smell from his home-tanned leather: the children went barefoot during the week, but on Sundays their clothes included stockings and boots, which were torture as they always seemed too small.



Oom Gallie took Sunday School in High Dutch, and few of the children found his services easy to understand. Those from outside rode in on donkeys and changed into their tidy Sunday clothes in the gwasha near the Police Camp before the service.

Camping trips were a joy. On one occasion John Martin took his family and a party of others with four wagons down to the Sabi to trade. Two wagons had half-tents in which the women slept while the men slept under the wagons. The day started about 3 a.m. when the oxen were inspanned while the travellers had hot coffee and rusks. The wagons jolted and squeaked over the rough tracks, and memories recall the camp fires, the darkness with the wagons drawn up

one behind the other, the silhouettes of the oxen lying down tethered to the trek chains, and the African drivers and voorleiers (piccanins who walked in front and led the oxen) round their own fires.



Mr Condry and his buckboard

During the 1914-1918 War Melsetter had an active War Fund Committee, and impressive donations were made to a vast number of relief funds in Britain, Rhodesia and other Allied countries. The Fund closed in August 1919 with the sum of £573.4.2d in cash or value — items such as donations of 12 oxen are listed — and it was decided to erect a small hail as a Memorial to those who fell in the War.

When Spanish Influenza hit the area there was no doctor at Mount Silinda so Dr. Rose's territory was larger than usual: the epidemic struck in many parts at the same time and of course all his practice was on horseback. From the terse, mainly telegraphic, records, it is obvious that from June to September 1919 he lived at absolutely full stretch.

In June a police telegram sent via Police, Umtali, reported 12 native deaths. All public meetings were prohibited and church services postponed. By 23rd there had been further deaths at Silinda and 500 natives were sick in the Chipinga area. Dr. Rose had attended 40 cases in the Rusitu area and arranged for Howells at the Mission, assisted by two messengers, to attend to local cases, and all natives at the Mission and many in the thickly populated Rusitu valley had been inoculated. In Melsetter he had dealt with eight native and four European cases. By the 27th one native had died at Melsetter and two more at Silinda; 45 Europeans and 60 natives were ill at Melsetter and the position was serious in Ngorima Reserve.

In July the schools were closed and had not re-opened by November. The Government sent Dr. Gurney to help Dr. Rose at Chipinga, where in August there were 27 European cases. One native died at Rocklands, 18 in Ngorima Reserve, and five at Uitkyk. A cordon was established from 1st to 16th July, the natives on the cordon being paid 8d a day.



At Rustu Mission: J. Condy, R. Howells, Mrs Condy, Mrs Howells

Telegrams regarding the position flew backwards and forwards, and needles, syringes and thousands of doses of vaccine were asked for. It was difficult to get enough supplies, and the position was further complicated by a Railway strike which prevented vaccine being despatched promptly. On-the-spot reports were sent in by the N.C. as well as by the District Surgeon. By September the outbreak had died down, and surplus vaccine was returned to Salisbury. That year cattle farmers had practically recovered from the heavy losses from A.C.F., trade in livestock was carried on at good all-round prices and hopes were high that A.C.F. was being eradicated.

H. Franklin was posted as Clerk in the Native Department, and Mrs. Franklin with her two children travelled on the coach with Longden and Charlie Remmer. The Franklins lived in a cottage consisting of two small rooms and an outside kitchen next door to Ferguson. Weekly events were the arrival of the Booze and Butter postcard and Leggy Martin's auction of butter, eggs, vegetables, poultry and other produce sent in by farmers. Dave Morris's horses, which were stabled in a grass shelter, were burned to death when early one morning in winter the stableboy went to feed them carrying a lighted candle, and the whole thing went up in flames. Dr. Rose was in Umlali on official business when Mrs. Franklin's baby was due, so when she felt it was time she walked over to Mrs. Leggy Martin at Rose Cottage, about a mile away, where the baby was born.

The most successful farm school was on F. W. S. Smith's Springvale, and with its establishment P. A. Cremer began his long association with Melsetter. Later he married Lalie Steyn and took over and developed Johannesburg farm school, today's Cashel School. He and Mrs. Cremer live on Msapa today, with Mrs. H. L. Steyn on Constantia a close neighbour.

Early in 1919 Condy rode out to Springvale with Stanley and discussed with interested parents the opening of a school; arrangements were completed and parents who shared in the erection were exempted from School Fees for one year.



P.A. Cremer

They built the schoolroom, 36' x 18', with walls 10' high and a thatched roof. They made the two windows and the door themselves as they found the Government grant of £5 insufficient to buy sash windows at £7.10 each in Umtali. Schalk Klopers made the desks from local timber with a grant of up to £15, and the furniture remained Government property.

Smith undertook to board the teacher at not more than £12 a quarter, and a teacher's room was built adjoining the schoolroom. It was unfinished when the school opened, and when Cremer arrived he had to bear the cost of £5.15 for materials for a ceiling which he put in himself, he bought four windowpanes at 4/3d each, and put in a floor of locally sawn planks. Later Condry said that the schoolroom was neat and clean, and asked for an allowance for Cremer of 5/- a month towards the cost of the boy employed by him at 10/- a month plus food, to clean the school and look after his horse.

The school opened in September 1919 with 13 day-scholars and five boarders: the building was not completed and the delay caused considerable inconvenience, but with Cremer's assistance it was gradually finished off. In running the school from Sub Std. A through to Std VI, he steadily overcame the difficulties of teaching children whose home language was Afrikaans and who had had little or no previous education although many were in their teens. The standard of attainment in English was much higher than Condry was accustomed to find in schools of that type, and gradually the average age in each class became satisfactory. An example of progress was a girl, aged 13 when she started in Sub Std. A in July one year, who passed Std. V at the end of the following year.

Numbers fluctuated in an unsatisfactory manner: in the first two years 31 came and went, with 18 the peak attendance and ten the lowest. The case of Thomas Bosch was an example of how children were removed: he started school in Sub Std. B, and two years later was in Std. V, able to take a creditable place in Std. VI anywhere in Rhodesia, but was taken away from school to herd cattle for the Tarka Ranch Manager in order to earn some money. At Condry's request he was sent back to school and was recommended for a free place at Melssetter School.



A wayside camp

John Klopers was born in 1912 and went to Springvale School when he was seven. It seems that he was not a model scholar, as his chief memory is of having his backside lambasted with a quince stick, but he does appreciate the fact that an effort was made to drill something into him. His memories include much walking and the occasional donkey or horse rides in getting to school later in Melssetter and in visiting his grandparents in Chipinga. When he went to Umtali High they

travelled in a lorry, and nobody minded if it got bogged down on the way to school but it was a different matter when they were anxious to get home as quickly as possible.

In 1919 Joey Grobler came to Melsetter to get married. George Gifford met her at Weltevrede, and they rode over Sawerombi to The Residency, where she spent the night with the Elliots.

The Rhodesia Advertiser carried a full account of the very pretty wedding, at which Elliott officiated in the specially decorated Courthouse. The bride, who had endeared herself to children and grownups alike, was attired in a pretty cream poplin costume with a white georgette hat, and carried a bouquet of white roses. After the ceremony a reception was held in the Courthouse; the presents were many, costly and useful, and included some substantial cheques. In the evening a very enjoyable dance was given by Lethbridge and Gifford, with attractive cosy corners tastefully arranged.

Some years before George Heyns had promised to lend his cart and horses for this wedding. He had since died, but his widow remembered the promise, and her son-in-law Solomon Potgieter had the cart ready after the reception. Joey changed and Fred drove the cart while Potgieter followed on Fred's horse until Thornton, from where he drove back. Mrs. Delaney mounted a Zanzibar donkey equipped with the bridegroom's present of a saddle, and they set off along the footpath to Willow Grove.

Fred managed Willow Grove and Fairview for John Meikle, who on occasion came by coach to Melsetter, a horse was sent in for him, and the two men were out on horseback every day checking the cattle as they wandered far and wide right down to Cecilton as there were no fences. Leopards were troublesome and Fred killed 59 during his seven years there.

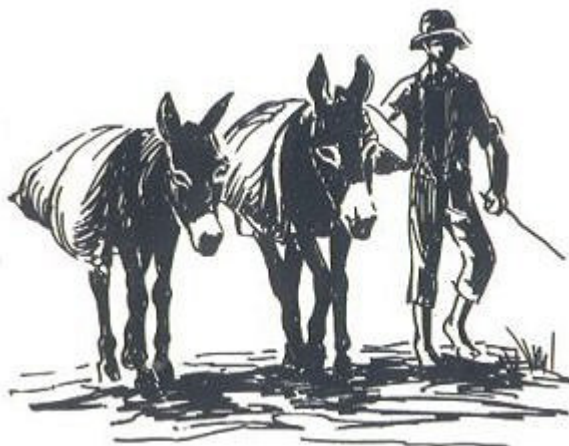
Once he rode to Odzi with drovers to take delivery of some cows and calves, while Mrs. Delaney stayed in Melsetter with the Mullings and the Remmers. The trip took three weeks, longer than expected because the newborn calves were too weak to walk long distances; there were delays waiting for streams to go down; and Fred's horse died of horsesickness, and he had to walk with a boy carrying his saddle.

They stayed with the Oxden Willows on Gwendingwe, and Condry visited them to see how a teacher had taken to farm life. Another visitor was George Gordon, the D.V.S., who planned to leave early in the morning so goodbyes were said overnight; in the morning the Delaneys heard him up early, walking up and down the stoep, and Fred got up to see if he wanted to speak to him again, and found their seven dogs below the steps just waiting to tackle Gordon when he stepped down.

They went to the village for weekends, where they played tennis and danced in the Courthouse, where Mrs. Longden taught them the two-step and the foxtrot. When Basil was born Mrs. Delaney made a tent with quince canes and a nappie for the round basket in which the baby lay on a cushion, and a boy carried it on his head and a girl followed with the portmanteaux. When Meikle gave up his Melsetter farms in 1926 the Delaneys moved to their own farm Olive Cliff.

Chapter 11

In 1920 ox transport was allowed as far as the Umvumvumu but not inside the district. Some of English's farms were still infected with A.C.F., and he and Longden undertook to fence the boundaries if they could pay for the materials in terms of the Animal Diseases Ordinance: if the fence were erected there would be no reason



why ox transport should not be allowed throughout the district apart from English's land.

The Magistrate thought the offer was good and held out opportunities of finally controlling and stamping out the disease in the area which had been actively infected for some years and was the only one remaining, and the D.V.S. agreed that it would be a very useful move. The C.V.S. refused to recommend that the fencing should be done under the Ordinance, but English did get some assistance for fencing.

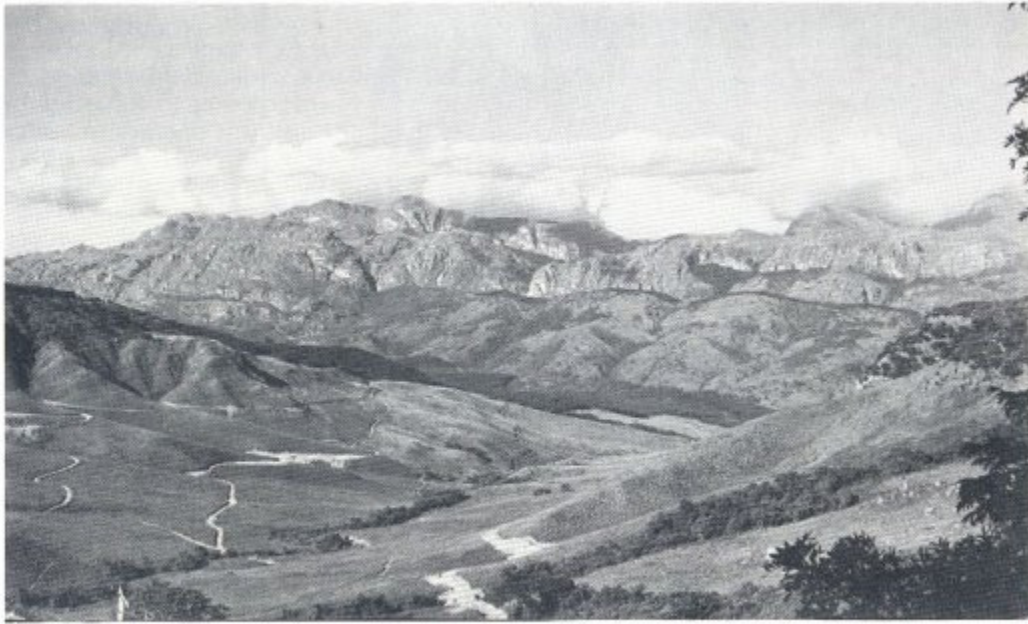
Condy's duties in inspecting farm schools included checking on whether the teacher was doing his job and was suitable for the post, whether the farmer was providing suitable accommodation, and whether all children were attending school. After he and Madge Elliott were married in 1920 she accompanied him on many visits of inspection, travelling by buckboard, going at the most 30 miles a day with eight mules, and taking weeks to get round every school between Umtali and Mount Silinda. When it was muddy and wet the flaps of the buckboard had to be down and it was very dark and dreary inside. At the farms the people were all the soul of kindness and hospitality, and the Condys were always invited at least to a meal and often to stay the night, although they had their camping equipment with them.

A teacher complained that no bath was provided and said that the farmer could not understand why she needed one as there was a perfectly good stream just outside the house. Condy insisted on a bathtub being provided and put in her room each evening, with water heated in paraffin tins outside and carried in for her. After she had been transferred the Condys visited the farm, and as they drove up the long straight avenue to the house the setting sun was shining on something hanging-up on the wall: when they got there they found it was the bathtub, beautifully polished up with sand, hanging on the front verandah as an ornament.

Checking on school attendance entailed travelling many miles to see all the children, and Condy had to enquire into parents' circumstances and to arrange for Government grants for all who could not pay for their children's schooling.

James Ward, R.A., came from England to visit his daughter Mary Rose and his son Jim. At Umtali he was met by Fred Taylor and they went out in Fred's motor-side-car to meet the Mail Coach which brought Jim, Mrs. McLeod, Allie and Harris and the luggage all packed tight. On their journey the Wards were the only passengers, and the fare was £3.15 each for a single journey.

The coach was as hard as iron and the bumping so awful that it might as well have had no springs, and they had to hold on tight for two long days so as to keep themselves on the seat. They paid 2/ 6d each for accommodation at the two halfway huts in charge of a native attendant, which each contained two iron bedsteads with mattresses of long straw and clean sheets and blankets, and chair, table, waterjug and basin, towels and candles.



The Chimanimani mountains

All through the journey the feet of the galloping mules raised a fine red dust which covered the passengers and was difficult to wash and brush off. Ward used his rug as a buffer between his back and the narrow backboard, but owing to the excessive jolting it slipped off unnoticed and when they reached Melsetter he authorised the Store-keeper to give 5/- to the driver if he succeeded in retrieving it.

They spent a night at Melsetter Hotel, and in the morning Jim took his father to tea with the Longdens, whom he described as the greatest and wealthiest people in Melsetter and Mrs. Longden as a finely dressed lady of great stature, and to lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Remmer a very nice lively woman. George Rose had sent in two horses which Jim harnessed to the Remmer's spring cart and they drove out to Lemon Kop, where Mary and her children were waiting to receive them, and where alterations were being made to the house. "Three new rooms are already built of brick and will be roofed with ornamental tiles from the Mount Silinda Works, and a huge kiln of new bricks is in the process of burning.

"I have a very nice large bedroom with two windows: owing to the verandah all round the house the rooms are dark, but most of the living and meals take place on the verandah. The chief room is used as a dining and drawing room: the walls are of cream-coloured plaster and the roof is lofty and timbered; on the walls are many antlered heads of South African deer and buffaloes, and my pictures, so that the room resembles something like a baronial hall. In the evening we have a wood fire on an open hearth.

"The place is imposing with more than 600 head of cattle, 180 head of sheep and numerous pigs, fowls and turkeys, six dogs and six horses. Everything grows profusely and there are rows of fine orange trees, bananas, pineapples, lemons, peaches, etc. and wheat and maize are also grown.



A Melsegger road

"There is plenty of shooting to be had: partridges, pheasant, wild doves, and all varieties of deer, wild pigs and wild dogs. George went out on Sunday and returned with two bushbuck: the meat is very close in fibre and without fat, but eats tender when shaved in thin slices, and bacon or ham is usually served with it.

"There is no lack of fresh butter, cream, milk, eggs, bacon and fruit. Mary is famous for her butter and finds a ready market for all she can make, and sends it off weekly in boxes. Of course, Snowball does most of the buttermaking, Mary superintends and encourages her house servants to all diligence."

In 1920 a Gymkhana Club was established, and two successful little race meetings were held. The following year some good horses were

entered, several farmers had bought mares for breeding, and a valuable pedigree stallion, Jack Tar, was imported and was available for service. During the decade the Club had its ups and downs, but interest was maintained. Races were run from Cronwright's house on the Orange Grove Road, passing (or not) the Hotel, and finishing under the gum trees near the Veterinary house.

In 1921 Chipinga residents, with a £ for £ Government grant, started work on the Sabi road which was opened for traffic in April 1922 although it was some years before it was in full use.

In order to find a better route for the Melsegger road out of Umtali to avoid the heavy sand a surveyor was sent to investigate the possibility of starting up the Vumba road, but he died on the job without submitting a report. After much correspondence the Government decided to spend £500 on improving the existing road. Nobody was satisfied with the position, and the Umtali Municipal Council convened a conference which unanimously resolved that a proper survey, regardless of expense, should be made to decide the route for a permanent metalled trunk road. Melsegger F.A. repeatedly pressed for improvement, and sent a petition, signed by 80 people, although the number of signatures was limited by difficulties of transport, of getting reliable messengers, and of getting to meetings. Local contributions for the road included 59 bags of mealies, one ox, and £169, with more promised if work were started.

Two instances were given of how slow travel was because of the state of the roads: a wagon on express business left Melsegger for Umtali on 26th March and had not returned by 22nd April; and a family, including a lady 76 years of age who had never been in a train, took 13 days with donkeywagon from Melsegger to Umtali. The apparently irrelevant remark about the old lady gives rise to speculation: were they planning to take her on a train journey, and if so, did they get there in time to catch it? Presumably the length of time in the donkeywagon did not worry her unduly.

The 1921-22 rainy season was very mild, so little damage was done to the road, and for the first six months of 1922 traffic was unimpeded, even motorcars travelled without hindrance, but with almost no rain at all from May to September the roads became very dusty and all vehicles found it hard work ploughing through the sandy stretches. In July 1922 the first day return trip was made

by Overland of the Umtali Taxi Co.; it left Umtali at 4 a.m., arrived in Melsetter at 11.30, left again at 1.20 p.m., and reached Umtali at 8.30.



At the Gwasha. Back Row: W.M.Longden, J.L.Martin, H.Wasserman, J.Heyns, F.Joubert, Rev. A.B.Wessels, P.Martin, W. van Riet, S.Steyn, J.H.Kok, J.A.Kok, T.Ferreira. 2nd Row: Mrs Rabie, Mrs P.Martin, Mrs Longden, A.Rabie, Mrs J.L.Martin, Mrs Wessels, F.S.Malan, Mrs Kleyn. 3rd Row: A.D.Olwage, Mrs J.A.Kok, Mrs Cronwright, Mrs A.D.Olwage, Mrs Heyns, Mrs J.H.Kok.

In 1921 the Dutch Reformed Church built a schoolroom in the township to which most farmers sent their children, but it fared no better financially than the Government Hill School, and closed down for lack of funds in 1922. Its establishment and the opening of farm schools had, however, affected attendance at the Government School.

McLeod retired and James Harvie took over as Principal in 1921. That year three temporary rondavels, destined to do duty for nearly 30 years, were built in the space between the two dormitory blocks, one as the only sickroom, one as a stockroom, and the third a staff sitting-room or matron's bedroom.

The Brent, Scott, Cronwright, Ward and Edwards children from the Chipinga district all travelled on donkeyback to get to school, and for some the journey took three days. The Brents stayed overnight at Vermont, and they and the Scotts left together at sparrowsqueak next morning. They spent the night in very tatty disused pole-and-dagga huts under the gum trees on Albany, and rode along the Nyahode valley next day, arriving in Melsetter about midday. On one occasion Donald Scott was riding a donkey which had weaned her foal a day or two before the trip, and hoped to have milk with the early morning coffee, but found it was not a good idea. Later they had horses and did the trip in one day, 32 miles via Knutsford or 38 via Albany. Once there were four to get to school and only two horses, so they had to ride-and-tie, and on this occasion were put up by Tom Ferreira at Lavina's Rust. One day Irene and Donald, on the last stint from the Nyahode river, were chased by hungry kafir dogs and arrived in Melsetter in a state of collapse.

Scholars were very much restricted to bounds in the early days, but later, when there were only a few hoarders, they were allowed almost unlimited freedom out of school hours. This gave them

an opportunity to scavenge for food, as what they got at the school table was very limited and of poor quality: the complaint about the food was not just schoolboy bellyaching; Dr. Rose inspected the fare and sent in an adverse report, and from official records it is learned that the diet in 1921 contained a great deal of mealie meal porridge. The School's deciduous orchard was the one place always out of bounds, but that did not deter scholars from helping themselves when they could.

From Tanganda the Wards rode each term to Lemon Kop, spent the night there, and reached Melsetter the next day. A farm labourer carried the trunk containing their few necessary changes of clothing, and rode or led the horse back to the farm. They used bridle paths extensively, and most journeys were uneventful although occasionally there were flooded rivers to cross and once Jimmy Ward was flanked by a pack of wild dogs for some miles which kept pace with the horse as it galloped, trotted or walked.

Life at the School was pleasant. They had a tennis court, but their main recreation was walking over the surrounding country with sometimes a very chilly swim in the pool at the bottom of the Bridal Veil Falls. Teaching was restricted to the three R's, and some pupils had to do private study at home before going on to Umtali High.

In 1922 the School had only five boarders, the boardinghouse was closed in June, and Harvie left. Mr. and Mrs. Franklin occupied the school house and looked after it. They boarded the only teacher, Miss Ford, and their elder children attended the classes. To assist parents who had then to send their children to Umtali as boarders, the Government made grants through the Land Bank towards the cost of transport.

A.C.F. kept portions of the district in quarantine and, when some restrictions were lifted, the prices had fallen to such an extent that farmers preferred to retain their stock. 109 head of cattle died on Tilbury in 1921 and there were successive fresh outbreaks.



*Back Row: Rev. A.B. Wessels, Messrs Rabie, J.L. Martin, J.H. Kok
Front Row: Messrs A.D. Olwage, W.M. Longden, F.S. Malan, T. Ferreira, W. van Riet*

1922 was a year of general depression, when, following A.C.F. outbreaks and the slump in cattle prices, a drought resulted in shortage of grain. Two financial ventures also failed with heavy losses to local members, and, through the resultant lack of available cash, storekeepers also suffered heavily. The first venture was the Umtali Farmers' Co-op Society, whose local members were compelled to pay their pro rata share of the losses, between £45 and £50, although they had received only trifling benefits. The second was the Odri Canning Co., to which local shareholders had subscribed fresh capital to assist in reopening it, seeing in it the only means of disposing of surplus slaughter stock; it was a vain sacrifice as the factory closed down after barely three months and went into liquidation and the export of slaughter stock, the farmers' chief means of support, practically ceased.

Some horses were imported, and one case only of horsesickness was reported in 1922. Farmers were very particular to keep up inoculation, anxiety was felt when the Veterinary Department was unable to furnish fresh supplies of the virus, and the following year there were great losses from horsesickness.

Cronwright, besides being a General Dealer, auctioneer and dealer in gunpowder and explosives, was in a small way dealer in roll tobacco. He obtained excellent roll tobacco grown and manufactured by the farmers and in one particularly good year he sent 3000 lbs into Umtali, and felt that his business was capable of expansion. When a new Customs and Excise Ordinance was brought in, however,, he found the Regulations so onerous and the penalties so alarming that he closed down the tobacco side. He already paid £40 per annum in licences, but objected not so much to the cost of the new licence as to the amount of book-keeping required for dealing in very small quantities.

The Farmer's Association held regular meetings, at which speakers from Salisbury included the Chief Forestry Officer, the Acting Chief Vet, a Cotton expert and the Chief Land Inspector. Among matters discussed were the need for a hospital and a District Nurse. Melsetter F.A. resolved to admit lady members at 2/ 6d per annum, and the three local Associations formed a union for closer contact and joined with Umtali F.A. as a central body to co-operate in the promotion of publicity.

W. W. Tucker succeeded Elliott as C.C. and R.M. and pressed for houses for Government officials: an official residence for the Magistrate was an urgent need, as habitable houses in the town were seldom available. The small hotel was well conducted, but was not a desirable home for Officials to reside at permanently, and the two small blocks of Government quarters were occupied by the Assistant N.C. and the D.V.S. and junior officials had to make their own arrangements at considerable personal expense. Later, in 1928, the Government bought The Gwasha from Longden as the Residency.

Farewell Roberts, who had been born in Melsetter in 1900, came as clerk in the Magistrate's office and found the Township very quiet as everybody had a lot of difficulty in making ends meet, but although they were all hard up they were all happy and contented, and played tennis, shot their meat, and enjoyed horse-riding. That year Melsetter much appreciated seeing its first bioscope.



Mr and Mrs Tawse-Jollie at the Gwasha

A keen interest was taken in the political situation before the Referendum to decide whether Rhodesia should unite with South Africa or go ahead on her own with Responsible Government, and the future was freely discussed with perfect good humour. Longden was an enthusiastic Unionist, and was opposed by Mrs. Tawse-Jollie who had defeated him at the previous elections, was Rhodesia's first woman M.P., and now campaigned for Responsible Government. Some residents hoped that Melssetter would get a railway if the Referendum went in favour of union. Many political meetings were held, frequently addressed by speakers from Salisbury.

F. S. Malan, Minister for Mines & Industries of the Union of South Africa, visited Melssetter in August at the invitation of the F.A., and addressed meetings and attended a Garden Party at The Gwasha.

On 2nd May 1922 in the Court House a representative meeting of eight out of twelve householders in town and six out of seven on the Commonage decided to appoint a Village Management Board for Melssetter Township. C. Orpen and Dr. Rose were proposed as Government nominees, and Mulling and H. D. Martin elected as local members.

The first V.M.B. meeting was held in the Magistrate's office in June. Tucker took the Chair, and successive senior Government officials were regularly elected to this position.

Lethbridge started as Honorary Secretary, and when he became a member of the Board the Secretary's salary was £2 a month with free sanitary service, and later varied between was a prob £5 and £6.

The Ratepayers' A.G.M. in 1923 elected J. L. Martin, H. D. Martin, Mulling and Overland Gordon to the Board. Other members during the decade were the Revs. A. B. Wessels and C. A. van Schalkwyk, Longden and Sossen, whose Emporium was opened in 1933. In 1933 F. E. Cronwright started his long and valued membership. Those first meetings set the pattern for years of discussion on topics which took up much time in the problems of administration, and many of them caused constant and and regular concern.

The town water furrows were sometimes used in an irregular manner, residents complained about not getting their fair share of water, and there were many other snags attendant upon the method of supply. An argument took place with the Police when the patient Magistrate found a dam built across the town furrow and an excavation made so that refresi every drop of water was diverted from the kloof into the police furrow; he had the matter rectified, and asked the Police Superintendent to find out who had caused the trouble. He said that masses of weeds were choking the police furrow along its entire length and that if it was cleaned and puddled regularly, as was the town furrow, the Police would find that they had ample water without interfering with the town supply.

The Sanitary Service was the V.M.B.'s only source of revenue, the fee being 10/- a month per bucket — which cost 14/6d each — and the service had many problems. Sanitary Fees, later called Village Fees, included night soil removal, rubbish removal, water supplies and the right to graze 20 head of cattle free on the commonage: for stock above this number the charge was 1/- a head for large stock and 6d a head for small.

After a year's successful administration the V.M.B. had saved £50 out of Sanitary Fees, and built a small reinforced concrete dam at the intake for £38, and in 1924 bought and installed 1300 feet of black piping at 1 / 2d per foot, which partially solved the immediate water problem.

Dangerous trees caused much discussion: trees could be cut down without specific permission, and standowners had to apply for permission even to cut branches; in 1925 nine trees in the streets were felled on the advice of a Forestry official. Firewood was another headache as people collected it illegally and did not pay dues.

Fireguards for the protection of the township and of individual plots had to be dealt with regularly, as did also the question of keeping the village grass cut.

The first burial in the new Cemetery was in November 1922. A later request for Government assistance in fencing it was refused, and the Board was told that funds should be raised locally by private subscription. Although the greater part of the town population consisted of Civil Servants who were unlikely to contribute and most farms had their own private burial grounds, somehow the money was found and the site was fenced and tidied.

With their slender finances the V.M.B. found it difficult to maintain the roads for which they were responsible in the surveyed township, and frequently appealed to the Divisional Roads Engineer for improvement to the road to the Police Camp, the path to the Waterfall, and other roads outside their precincts.

Efforts were made to ensure that all houses were built to a reasonable standard, but unsightly Nachtmal houses, miserable shanties, existed unoccupied save for when the owners visited the town, and caused concern until gradually they were demolished.

Another unattractive feature resulted from butchers' practice of slaughtering cattle and pegging out hides in the streets and not disposing properly of offal. Residents objected, and the V.M.B. arranged for slaughter poles and insisted that offal should be buried.

More village telephones were installed, and Melsetter was included in the list of Minor Exchanges.

Wagon transport was still normal, but the quicker buckboard was used by Condry inspecting



Gum trees

schools and by Gorden the Vet, Captain Onyett the Police Superintendent and Dr. Magoon the dentist on their rounds, and horses were used by many, still including Dr. Rose. In 1923 the main roads were in a shocking state, and the Magistrate said that there was nothing to prevent proper repair and that inhabitants of an isolated district such as this should be given first and special consideration in access to the railway line.

Nan Crawhall (Mrs. Ball) was teaching at Umtali High School, and she and Kay Knipe wanted to spend a holiday with Mrs. Tawse-Jollie near Mount Silinda. How to get there was a problem as nobody would do the trip from Umtali where there were only one or two private cars and one taxi, but eventually Reading fetched them in his old bone-shaker Overland and conveyed them to Chipinga for £50. As the car could take no luggage, carriers, for whom they paid 1/- a day and supplied food, took ten days to walk to Mount Silinda by devious paths through the hills.

In the cold dark morning the girls left at 4 o'clock. The dusty track wound in and out amongst the bush and over the bridgeless rivers. They ploughed through sand, skidding and swerving to avoid protruding tree stumps, and had to stop to allow the engine to cool every few miles; the breaks were pleasantly passed by making tea with boiling water from the radiator. At Thaba Nchu they were greeted by the regal figure of Mrs. Cashel; had tea with Mrs. Wodehouse, a gentle lady of great musical talent, who had most patiently made the highly polished floor of her lounge from papier mache and were given refreshment by kindly people along the route. From Cashel up over the mountains they tended to concentrate on the tortuous bends and steep slopes to the partial exclusion of enjoying the scenery, and admired the confidence with which Reading drove over a narrow divide where the land sloped steeply on either side. They skirted the Chimanimani mountains in the glow of evening light, and reached the hotel in the dark, where they had baths in water heated in paraffin tins on an outside fire.

Next morning as they jolted through the Nyahode river Nan's hat-box, on the running-board of the car, was ripped by a hidden branch. At Silverstream the passengers alighted while Reading bumped his way over rocks and stones through the riverbed. Later there was the perilous descent of Jansen's Hill, a narrow steep track with a great hump in the middle. For the last few miles in the dark to Chipinga a piccanin was engaged to carry a lantern through the veld to warn of stones and rocks in the way. They spent the night in the little guest house, and Mrs. Tawse-Jollie sent horses next morning for them to ride.

Mrs. Ball later had reason to be thankful that she knew the Melsetter and Chipinga areas when, married to the Vice-Principal of Umtali High School, the arrival of the school coach bringing the boys and girls from their distant homes was anxiously awaited. "After nearly fifty years I am proud to remember those grand youngsters of pioneer calibre, splendid and steadfast, with resourcefulness to meet all their difficulties, who are now fine men and women of our land."

The Morris-Carter Commission investigated the details of where the Africans had been living before the Europeans came and determined which areas should be set aside for their exclusive permanent occupation and reservation. In Melsetter the areas of occupation had definitely been in the lower-lying country away from frost and cold and near to water supplies, and on the basis of the Commission's findings generous Tribal Trust Lands were apportioned with provision for future population expansion.

Chief Sawyerombi was offered land but refused it. The VaRombe was a sub-tribe with very few followers dispersed on European farms who came under Chief Muwushu, and the Sawyerombi chieftianship was in due course discontinued. Chief Chikukwa was also offered land and refused it. The vaUngweme spread across the border with much of the tribe in Portuguese territory, and Chief Chikukwa's home was on Rocklands. He



and his followers decided that they would prefer to stay as they were and not to take up the alternative land offered to them in the Sabi as they felt that they had Mozambique open to them if they should want to move.

Mutambara and Muwushu T.T.L.s were marginal for agriculture, with erratic rainfall and a limited variety of crops which could be grown. When the population was scant it was possible for them to exist in their traditional manner gathering fruits and roots and hunting game although they did suffer from famine, depredations of wild animals, raids by other tribesmen, and disease. In 1923 a drought resulted in famine and great hardship. Franklin travelled round on horseback, shooting buck and distributing mealie-meal at different centres, and Farewell Roberts walked down the Devil's Staircase to Hot Springs to issue grain from a depot there, and heard lions most nights.

Chapter 12

In 1924 John Martin was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Southern Rhodesia, and was the able member for the Eastern constituency until his death.

Frequent complaints about the main roads were again made, but an encouraging piece of engineering was completed when the road was taken down the lefthand side of the Tandaai valley, as recommended by Longden ten years previously and pressed for ever since, and the impossible section over Rutherford's Hill was finally abandoned. Nothing was done regarding the dreadful portion of road between Melssetter and Jansen's Hill until the Chief Road Engineer had occasion to travel that road, whereupon a very small sum was granted for repair, and despite its smallness the road was greatly improved.



Bridle paths were used extensively by all Government officials and private travellers, and the Government granted £10 to repair the path over Pork Pie Hill (Nyamazure) which saved at least nine miles on the Melssetter-Umtali road. The F.A. fed the labourers and supervised the work, and the small sum and local subscriptions enabled the construction of an excellent path. There were other very saving short cuts, and horse-riders could effect considerable saving in distance by using the various paths that obtained; they were, however, in places very rough and even dangerous, and the CC. asked the Government to authorise the expenditure of about £10 annually on them, as this would be very advantageous.

The F.A. urged that an enquiry should be instituted into the spread of A.C.F. In 1924 the infected farms were: Lavina's Rust, Admiral, Cambridge, Everglades, Commonage, Belmont, Welgelegen, Dunstan, Tilbury, Glencoe, Forest Glade, Bloemhof, Albany, Heathfield, Kingsley, Lemon Kop, Fairview, Willowgrove, Tarka and Rumble Rills. Sheep farmers were, however, doing well, and the wool exported realised good prices. J. C. Kruger married Lizzie du Plessis, and they settled on Rookwood, farming with sheep and cattle. Kruger was experienced in sheep production and at the Government's request he was available to advise local farmers when required.

For the Melssetter War Memorial Hall money was subscribed, contributions of building materials were made in kind, and the building was started. Progress was slow, but by 1924 the two back rooms were in use, shelving was installed, and a library started with books and periodicals given by private people, but application for a Government grant was turned down, and the Library did not flourish. A captured German machine gun was presented to the Hall, sent by the South African Minister of Labour and Defence as a token of esteem and in appreciation of the services rendered by Rhodesians who served in the Union Defence Force! many years later the Trustees

felt that looking after a historic object such as this was beyond their powers, and the gun was handed over to Umtali Museum.

A market was established with F. E. Cronwright as Marketmaster and Abraham Olwage his deputy. The V.M.B. received 5% commission from Market sales for some years until one Chairman queried their right to this revenue and decided that the Board had no authority to accept it. The Saturday morning market was a cheerful social occasion and an opportunity to everybody to meet. The produce was a joy. lamb, paraffin tins of honey and fruit of every description at incredibly low prices, chickens at 6d each, butter 6d a lb. vegetables 1d a bunch.

After the market shopping had been done residents adjourned to the Melsetter Produce Exchange in Meikles' building for morning tea or coffee dispensed by Mrs. Longden, the gifted owner who had the knack of creating a party atmosphere anywhere. The M.P.E. took produce for goods and aimed at reducing prices at a time when money was so short, but there were already two stores in the village and it is doubtful whether Mrs. Longden made any profit. Her stock included imported dresses, materials, necklaces and other pretty things, and she was very generous with gifts to the children. Many memories are centred round the gay and cheerful atmosphere.



At the Police Camp the Station building consisted of an office, barrackroom, small bedroom and a diningroom: a short covered way led out to the kitchen. Sergeant E. A. Keogh was in charge, and lived with his family in separate quarters some 200 yards from the Station building, where Acting Corporal McGrane and Troopers Leon and Phillpots lived. Keogh was a most conscientious and efficient policeman, highly thought of by his superiors, and took an active part in village affairs. Leon liked long patrols and plenty of shooting when he could get it. Phillpots, only about five months out from England, arrived at the Station complete with a Red Indian motorbike, odds and ends of furniture, and a Great Dane. New stables and storesroom were erected at the Camp in 1929.

T. C. Fynn came as C.C. and Magistrate, and when he and Mrs. Fynn arrived with their five children aged between 12 and 4 they were entranced with the mountain beauty, the clear running water, the waterfalls and the maidenhair fern, but Mrs. Fynn's heart sank when she saw the bare Residency with its primitive kitchen and water from a furrow; their furniture had come by wagon, and much of it was broken. However, people were very kind and helpful and they soon got things straight and fitted in, and Fynn, who was a keen gardener, soon had the Residency and the Government offices surrounded with beds of flowers. They got to know people and gradually felt that they belonged and the children went to the School on the hill. There were climbing expeditions up Pork Pie, where Longden kept his horses, picnics up in the mountains with the sheep, and lots of riding and heavenly walks. A favourite picnic place was at the Fairy Falls just

outside the village; a large tin bath was packed with lunch, they walked out, and the children paddled in the pool at the foot of the falls.



Bridal Veil Falls

Life was very dull for the younger civil servants, so Fynn arranged dances in the Courtroom and sports and athletics. Good bridge was played in the evenings in different homes; George and Hildegard Gordon were such an asset: she was a great bridge player, a superb hostess and cook, so distinguished, and with a fascinating husky voice and accent.

The Portuguese Commandant sent in a desperately ill prospector, for whom a prison cell was cleared. Dr. Rose found he was too ill to travel further, so Mrs. Fynn, with Mrs. Bredenkamp's assistance, nursed him under the doctor's supervision; he made slight progress and the doctor got him to Umtali, but he died soon afterwards.

The children had a soapstone factory at the stream at the foot of the school hill: the soapstone was soft and could be cut with knives, so they manufactured tombstones, boxes with lids, dolls' house furniture and other items. The girls spent hours reading their first romances in bound copies of *The Girls' Own Paper* in the Library. When the Fynns were transferred they took all their

possessions with them and made the journey to Umtali by mule-wagon. The trip took a week, and was heaven for the children.

1924 was remarkable for the unusual number of visitors to this isolated but very beautiful district, and the C.C. said that many came for the scenery which was indicative of what might occur if only there were decent roads.

Among the visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Grafton Phillips who had retired from tea-planting in India and came to visit the Wards at New Year's Gift on the Tanganda river. The result of their visit was Rhodesia's first tea plantation at New Year's Gift and the establishment of the Rhodesia Tea Estates Company. Mr. and Mrs. Phillips brought their nephew (John Watson, who was killed in action in 1941) and nieces with them, and as a result of this family relationship by the time they retired to live at Adam's Ridge on Lemon Kop they were affectionately known to most of the district as The Uncle and The Aunt.

The Phillipses left Umtali in a Model T Ford at 7 a.m. with sandwiches only, assured by the optimistic driver that they would reach Melsetter by afternoon. By 5 p.m. they had done less than 60 miles, and after they had wrestled with tyre and major engine troubles it was dark, and they had to camp beside a large fire in the veld until daylight when they could see to carry on with the repairs. Getting going again, they got to within seven miles of Rocklands, and John Martin sent oxen to tow them in. It was a glorious day in May, and the leisurely drive at ox-pace enabled them to appreciate the beauty of the mountains. At Rocklands they were received with the warmest hospitality, and Mrs. Martin's calm acceptance of them, complete strangers, was impressive: she already had several other unexpected guests besides her own large family: two ladies who came in a buggy, a young man on a horse, and an old neighbour with his granddaughter and her tiny baby. After supper Mrs. Martin took Mrs. Phillips through her garden to see the most superb view of the Chimanimanis by moonlight. Next day, towed again by the oxen, they arrived at Melsetter Hotel, six bedrooms in a row along a small verandah, with a tiny bar and diningroom at one end. For bathing the hotel resources were a saucer bath and a tin of hot water.

Another outstanding Open House was the F. E. Cronwrights'. Cronwright came to Gazaland as a young man in 1896, and managed a store at Jersey until he and Mrs. Cronwright moved to their Melsetter home, known today as Beverley Park. Mrs. Cronwright's hospitality and kindness are remembered with warm affection; her own large family kept her very busy, but she welcomed overnight visitors at any time and generously gave away petrol boxes of assorted fruit and vegetables. When her eldest son, Wilson, was widowed, she cheerfully took on the care of his little daughters Rose and Frances. She had a Spider cart for travelling around on nursing duty, and ran an outpatients' clinic for Africans.

A feature of the year was the loyal welcome to the Governor on his visit, and the C.C. reported that relations between the two European sections of the community were very pleasant, and, though times were very bad indeed, a distinctly hopeful feeling prevailed owing to the attitude of the new Government to the district.

The F.A. arranged a farmer's day annually in May on Empire Day, which it was hoped would develop into an Agricultural Show, with exhibitions of produce, sports for the children, and a dance in the evening.

Scholarships and grants were of great value to children from homes where money was so scarce. From Springvale School in 1924 Walter Smith was given a grant to go on to Umtali High School: his father's farm had been in quarantine for A.C.F. for over four years and was likely to be for at least another year and he was unable to sell cattle.

In 1925 all Std. V pupils were eligible to enter for Junior Beit Scholarships, thought to be a record for a Rhodesian farm school; all three came from homes where Afrikaans was the mother tongue but their English was almost as good as if it were their home language. Cremer had the art of getting the best out of his pupils, and the children caught much of his enthusiasm and enjoyed their lessons; he brought them in in the afternoon to supervise their homework, the work throughout the school was of a high order and bore ample evidence of skilful teaching, and parents were delighted with the progress. Throughout his six years at Springvale Cremer did consistently good work and it was entirely due to his efforts that all his pupils were so well advanced and his school maintained its position as one of the most efficient farm schools.

At the end of 1925 Cremer took leave to study for higher qualifications, and Springvale school lasted for only one more year. When Condry inspected it in September 1926 he found it very disappointing and the standard of work very poor. When he told the teacher that the Government would not pay good money for bad work she admitted neglect and promised to do better, but there are no further records of the school.

At Melsetter School the boarding hostel, which had remained closed since 1922 in spite of urgent appeals from bodies such as the F.A., was reopened in January 1925 with Mrs. Hall as the Lady Principal and Superintendent and her sister Mrs. Paxton as Matron.



Mr and Mrs F.E. Cronwright

With another heavy rainy season travelling was once again very difficult and there were many complaints about the roads. As no motorcars could get through Marthinus Martin was sent to borrow Frik Smith's mule-wagon to transport the children to Umtali schools. Marthinus rode off from Rocklands, and the little stream just before Springvale was so full that it took him on his horse downstream for 100 yards before they could get out on the other side. Smith came in with his wagon and the party set off: an old lady, Betty Hall, and a number of boys. They had a terrible time: the wagon had to be pulled through the mud, the harness and trekgear kept breaking through being wet all the time, and it took over a week to get to Umtali.

Jimmy Ward and other scholars from Chipinga took two days to get by car to Melsetter where they stayed at the Roses' house, then occupied by Charles Stumbles and Dr. Plowright (doing locum tenens for Dr. Rose on leave). They took off in a light wagon drawn by mules escorted by John Martin on horseback. The first day they reached Rocklands, and proceeded by slow stages, waiting at each of the main rivers for the floods to subside, and eventually three of them walked the last 30 miles into Umtali three weeks after leaving home.

Many High School boarders were a month late and three teachers, travelling in a Whippet Overlander, left Melsetter on 24th January and only managed to reach Umtali on 3 1st, with their diet on the arduous journey consisting mainly of native rice.

Social activities were severely curtailed: no picnics, no walks, no sport; the Civil servants were reduced to playing ping-pong in the Courtroom; the mail coaches and goodswagons were unable to get through, and people were down to the barest necessities brought over the mountains by carriers and shared out very sparingly. Things like sugar and candles became precious, and whisky and cigarettes a dream of the past. The weather cleared at last, and when the first mail came through the whole population turned out to greet it down at the drift.

Armistice Day was celebrated with an English Fair, sideshows, two minutes' silence, sale of work and produce, gymkhana, fancy dress carnival and dance.

The postal and passenger services were regularly described as a disgrace, and hopes of improvement were raised, only to be dashed again, when the Minister of Mines & Public Works told Parliament in June 1925 that it was interesting that Melsetter, perhaps the worst served of any closely settled district and whose postal facilities were more than bad, was to have had the fastest mail and passenger service in the country as arrangements had actually been made for a regular aeroplane service, but the machines went wrong and the project had to be abandoned.

The Financial News described Melsetter's timber resources and mentioned the prospect of a proposed railway line to link up with the Beira line at Muda, and a private firm was reported to have established a weekly motor lorry service between Umtali and Melsetter, but nothing came of these schemes.

In January 1926 the Mail Coach only managed twelve miles out of Umtali before it had to turn back because of the washed-out road, but by April an improved twice-weekly service was in operation.

In 1927 Zeederberg's long association with Melsetter ceased when full motor mail services started. The service was divided into two routes, with Rhodesia Railways operating directly to Chipinga, and Frikkie Heyns fulfilling the postal contract to Melsetter. He ran the service with the latest model Dodge commercial vehicle, aimed to do the mountain route in 12 hours, and charged a flat rate of £1 per 100 lbs to or from Umtali. In 1928 the Railways Road Motor Service took over the twice-weekly Melsetter run and Heyns became an R.M.S. driver with the reputation of always being able to get his lorry through.

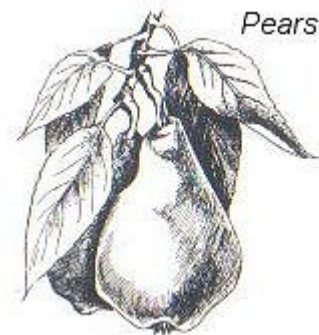


Road transport difficulties

An enormous improvement on the road was slowly taking place as bridges, thanks to the Beit Trust, were built over the rivers, which were such an advance on the drifts that travellers accepted their awkwardness and difficulties as a matter of course: along the winding road one suddenly came upon the steep descent to a narrow cement bridge just wide enough for one vehicle, with light low guard rails on each side, and an equally steep rise at the other end.

Chapter 13

In 1927 Powys-Jones was posted as Assistant N.C. to Melsetter, a name which, in the hot Mazoe valley, conjured up pictures of green hills and mountains, mist, cool days, cold nights and cheerful log fires. Mrs. P-J packed their possessions with piles of golden grass in cases made of wood from the veld tied with tambo bark stripped off vines and soaked in water to make it pliable.



Their belongings were sent ahead on donkeywagons from Umtali, and the P-Js followed by motorcar. A Police Sergeant was also on transfer, and looking down from the top of a very steep hill they saw in a drift below them an overturned wagon: boxes, crates, furniture, scattered everywhere, and donkeys quietly nibbling roadside grass. "Oh, poor Sergeant", they thought, "how awful, all his household goods flung about in the dry river bed." When they got down they found to their horror it was their own possessions! Before they could pass the wagon had to be righted, the donkeys caught and inspanned and the wagon moved out of the way. It was weeks before that load of furniture arrived, and their first load contained beds without mattresses, basins without jugs, and nothing to cook in.

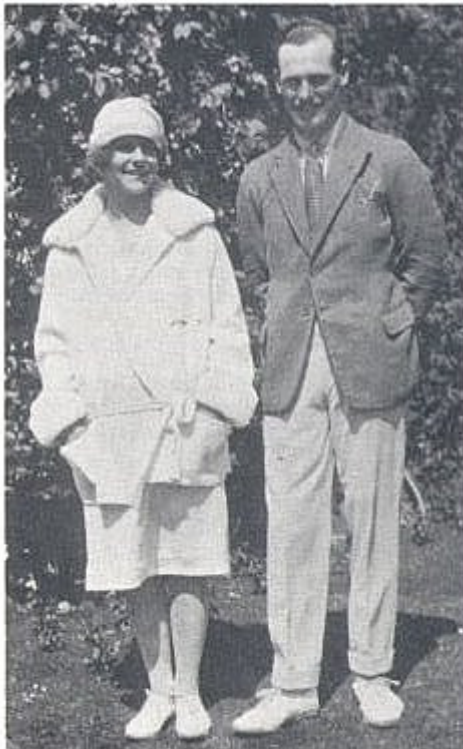
Their new home, which the Garsides now own, was a pretty thatched cottage covered in

pink roses. Their predecessors were keen riders, and as there was no stable they had turned the bathroom into one, with the bath as the feeding trough: not an ideal arrangement. A beautiful stream irrigated the garden, but seven inches of rain one weekend were too much for the little stream which promptly burst its banks and went in through the back door — with inches of water rushing through the house and seeping into the rooms — and out of the front door, cascading down the high and wide flight of steps taking with it mud, sticks and leaves. The roof was not very waterproof, and on one occasion the P-Js sat up in bed to enjoy their early morning tea with open umbrellas over their heads. To preserve food two petrol tins were kept in a sack with a tin on top to drip the water.

Everyone grew their food and made their clothes; there were no hairdressers, so everybody looked the same: the only comfort was that everybody looked peculiar.

One Sunday afternoon in very clear weather and high wind a veld-fire began, and P-J rushed off to turn out the bandits and collect all possible helpers to counterfire and put out the flames to save the threatened school and village. Up their mountainside fire came on three sides: Mrs. P-J collected their child, the horse, the dog and precious cat, all very frightened, and with cat in basket, dog on lead, horse by halter and Collette by hand, round and round the flowerbed in front of the house they went, changing direction when they got giddy. The fire passed and no sparks fell on the thatched roof.

There was a great occasion when song and noise came on the wind from Pork Pie. One of the Martins had shot a marauding lion, and a throng of Africans singing the great Lion Song eulogising the hunter streamed behind the great beast tied to two poles and carried with pride through the village. Their burden was put down in front of the Office to the continued shouting of their song. Everyone congregated to watch the scene, but were soon driven away by the pungent smell of the King of Beasts.



Peggy and Bill Hanmer

lives, and when at Nachtmaal they invaded all flat, she impounded the lot. When Collette tal donkey it got rid of her and galloped to the : Mrs. P-J and the gardenboy rushed off and ut unhurt child.

When Mrs. P-J was ill with blood-poisoning from pruning roses, Dr. Rose was away and a doctor out from Umtali for Mr. Longden was asked to see her, and decided to operate straight away. The boy with the key to Dr. Rose's surgery was located and the carvers which had been used to cut off Daantjie Steyn's leg were brought up to the house and Mrs. P-J sterilised them in a baby bath on the No. 8 Dover stove. The doctor gave her morphia, her husband gave her chloroform, and out she went. The doctor told P-J to bring her into hospital first thing the next morning, and she hadn't come round properly when he wakened her and told her to get up. She tottered along to the bathroom, washed, dressed and got into the car. As a result of the anaesthetics she had to stop every half hour, and it took thirteen and a half hours to reach Umtali hospital. There she heard them planning to amputate three fingers, and when her husband came up at visiting hour she was dressed and ready to go — which she did

anaesthetics she had to stop every half hour, and it took thirteen and a half hours to reach Umtali hospital. There she heard them planning to amputate three fingers, and when her husband came up at visiting hour she was dressed and ready to go — which she did without signing out. It was a long journey home again, and it took many months to get her hand really right.

Lack of a doctor on the spot was keenly felt. When the P-Js came they were riddled with malaria, and once P-J was unconscious in one bedroom and Collette delirious in the other. But neighbours were kind and helpful, everyone helped everyone else, and in spite of the drawbacks it was a lovely life and the Powys-Joneses adored it.

Longden's illness was serious and he was not expected to live. Mrs. Longden, being a practical woman, ordered a coffin from Umtali. By the time it arrived on the Post Lorry Longden's condition had improved, so the box was safely stowed away in one of the hotel's spare bedrooms with the door firmly locked to save shock, horror and embarrassment. Longden was advised to live at a lower altitude, and in 1928 he and Mrs. Longden moved to Umtali and later to Natal.

In 1927 Hanmer Brothers bought Fairview and Heathfield, imported Merino ewes and by 1929 the flock numbered 800 and proved the suitability of establishing the industry on a considerable scale. William and Peggy Hanmer made their home on Fairview and both worked indefatigably for Melsegger until they moved to Inyanga in 1952, when their son Tony ran Fairview. Some of the five Hanmer children were born at Fairview, and for Janet's birth Dr. Rose attended and Sister du Plessis came from Umtali. It was midwinter and very cold, and Peggy was in a draughty room with the walls not up to the roof. The primitive conditions evidently weighed on the well-trained nurse's mind because when Peggy was asleep after the baby was born Dupie had a dream in which the devil said that the woman would die if she did not give her some air, so Dupie went through and opened a window. A little later she dreamed that the devil returned and asked what was the good of opening a window when the woman was already dead, so Dupie went back to the all too well ventilated bedroom and this time wakened Peggy to reassure herself that she was alive.

John Olivey first heard of Melsegger in 1928 when J. C. Kruger wrote in the Rhodesia Herald about the great possibilities for Merino sheep in Melsegger, and he and some friends decided to go and have a look at the area. They read up Melsegger in the 1924 South & East African Year Book and Guide: "98 miles South of Umtali the road leads along the watershed. Coaches run weekly, fare 80/- each way; luggage allowance 30 lbs. Wagons take five or six days during the dry season. Settlers have been tempted chiefly by the fertile land and favourable prospects both as regards agriculture and cattle raising. (Small Hotel). White population of the township 114 and of the district 746 (1921). Natives about 23 000. Even the birds and insects frequenting it are said to be peculiar to this area."



*Ann and Annabel Olivey
in Sawerombi homestead*

As they set out from Umtali they visualised 98 miles as taking three to four hours, but the journey took all day and early nightfall. Crossing the Mpudzi river was the first hold-up, where the heavy sand drift was impassable for cars on their own, and for 10/- one was towed across by oxen which had first to be located before being harnessed.

They arrived at Melssetter Hotel about 8 p.m. and were not made very welcome so made enquiries for another hotel! As there was a fine smell of curry they thought supper could not be far off: John learned later that a bush "peculiar to this area" smells very like curry. Mine host opened the bar and soon mellowed sufficiently to produce some cold meat and vegetables.

Before leaving Salisbury John had made enquiries about Government land, and was told of a farm provisionally reserved as an Experimental Farm, which the Government would sell provided the price were right: enquiries in Melssetter proved this to be in fact the Chimanamani Mountains — and he looked elsewhere. Sawerombi was brought to his notice, and the party was introduced to John Martin who had the selling of it for Longden. He in turn introduced them to Stanley, who provided horses and took them over Sawerombi, going out via the Waterfall on the old pioneer road and returning over Pork Pie.



Elizabeth Martin and John Olivey

They went to a tennis party at the School, where Mr. and Mrs. Hallas made excellent hosts and a good time was had by all who had turned out to see the new arrivals. The court had very little clearance behind the back lines, and on one side a large rock of approximately the right height was used to hold up the net while the other side was supported in a more conventional fashion by a tree. John's party decided that the balls must have been brought in with the early settlers: one even disintegrated in mid-air.

Negotiations for the sale of the farm proceeded, and on 1st October 1928 transfer passed to John and he settled in.

Besides the annual Gymkhana and Race Meetings and weekly tennis other pleasures were found in horse rides and picnics. People sent their horses out to Rocklands on Saturday and met there on Sunday to ride through the Pass to the Portuguese border post. There, if prior warning had been given, the Commandant entertained the party to lunch with periperi chicken, wine and a gramophone of old vintage. The Commandant had only one musical piece, so "England, Hope and Glory" churned out during lunch, with everyone enjoying everything. Back at Rocklands Mrs. Martin, friend of all, produced tea and cakes in her small front parlour, while Mr. Martin entertained the men with home-made peach brandy, and the weekend picnic was declared a great success.

In religious activities pride of place went to the Dutch Reformed Church, with a resident Predikant and regular Nachtmal occasions. Wagons rolled up, women with big floppy kappies appeared, a rather flat bell rang, and men with long beards and stern faces spoke in guttural tongues. When John, a young Rooinek, ventured into their midst and attempted a few halting words in Afrikaans, he received a great welcome, much laughter at his mistakes, and many handshakes.

John married Ann Siebert, a teacher at the School and their daughter Annabel (Mrs. C. P. Hayter) was born in 1932. In February 1929 the new Beit bridges on the main road were severely tested in a damaging storm of high winds and torrential rain. All the rivers were raging torrents with the approaches washed away, and the Mpudzi was 5' over



A Beit Bridge on the Mpudzi River

the new bridge and some material was carried away but the piers stood the strain of the great mass of rushing water. At Moodie's Nek a heavy fall of rock and earth completely obliterated the road. The R.M.S. was held up and Cashel volunteers took the mails to Johannesburg and carriers took them on over the mountain footpaths to Melssetter, with similar arrangements for outgoing mails. Heavy rains continued, and the Railways had a struggle to maintain one service a week instead of the scheduled two: they found that their two-ton Morris 6-wheeled lorry was the best type for maintaining regularity of service in bad road and weather conditions, and also used a 4-wheeled Reo Motor lorry.

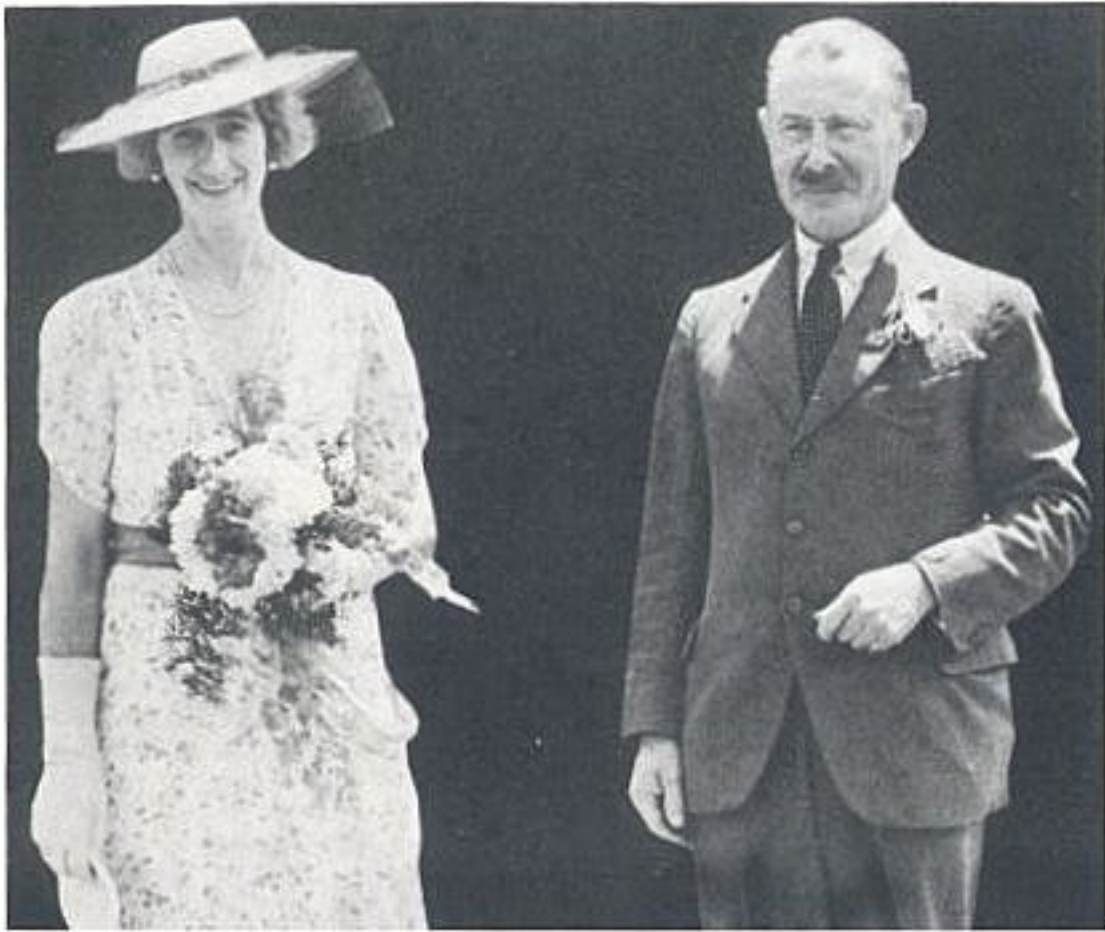
In April the R.M.S. service was extended to Highlands, and many farmers disposed of the transport which they had previously used to get their produce in to Melssetter for loading. The lorries left Umtali at 4 a.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays and spent two nights in Melssetter, doing the Highlands trip on the intervening day. This service through the area with the most dairy cattle and sheep in the district was well patronised: 19 farmers used it, and some 1 200 lbs cream and 150 lbs butter and other exports were sent on it weekly.

Great dissatisfaction was expressed when in December the lorry, with no warning, stopped coming to Highlands, and farmers were stranded with no means of getting their perishables away. The return lorry left a day earlier than scheduled, and, although people in the village had a few hours' warning of the change, mails were disrupted.

The Railways' reason for the discontinuance of the service was the state of the road and the farmers asked the Roads Department to repair the bad patches immediately but were told that the road would be a dry-season one only until the necessary exceptionally heavy expenditure was authorised for major work when the route of the road was decided.

The sudden and arbitrary change aroused general indignation. It was felt that if due notice had been given of the changes the public would have been prepared and, though a certain amount of grumbling might have taken place, would have acquiesced in the decision. Melssetter people wondered under what rule they were living, whether that of an elected legislative body, or a despotism consisting of the Railways and the Post Office.

Soon afterwards a special lorry was sent as far as Thornton, which managed the journey and returned to town safely, and in due course the regular service to Highlands was re-introduced.



Captain and Mrs Allott

Captain F. H. Allott with his wife and daughters came from England to farm in Melsetter on the advice of his cousin Bill Hanmer. From Umtali they travelled out on a privately-owned lorry, open to the skies and with hardly any seating accommodation, and what there was was certainly not comfortable. They left Umtali at six o'clock in the morning and arrived at 8 o'clock at night. The driver, Martin Cronwright, constantly stopped to have a shot at a buck, and if successful threw the dead beast into the back of the already overcrowded lorry. Local inhabitants living close to the road were most hospitable and brought steaming hot cups of sweet coffee.

The Allotts lives for six months at Fairview in an enormous rondavel which served as bedroom, livingroom and kitchen, and when the Hanmers went on holiday the Allotts were entrusted with the care of the farm and the job of making a new road to Heathfield. One night they were wakened by a herdboys saying that the cattle were bellowing and something was wrong. Ted attached his night-shooting lamp to his head with its elastic band and took his gun and he and Olive crept up to the cattle kraal, climbed onto the roof of the shed and lay flat, listening for the cause of the disturbance. After what seemed hours the cattle, which had temporarily quietened down, became restless and started to bellow, all turning to face one way. Ted switched on the lamp and they saw two pairs of eyes reflected in the light. Lion or leopard? Ted was preparing to aim when at that moment the elastic band snapped, the lamp fell down, the light went out and they were plunged in darkness. He couldn't get it to light again and they didn't dare move until sure that the marauders had gone, but when everything was quiet they came down and returned

to the house thoroughly disappointed. Some sceptics laughed at the idea of lion, but Erasmus, a real old-Timer, examined the spoor and stated most emphatically that they were lion.



The road to Umtali

After leaving Fairview the Allotts camped on Welgelegen for a month, where they loved the river and the close proximity to the Chimanimanis and were very tempted to buy it, but two events finally decided them not to: the blind fly which attacked the horses perpetually and worried them nearly to death; and then A.C.F. with cattle dying all around, and when they found a dead beast lying in the drinking water furrow they thought it was time to quit.

They bought Belmont and Belmont Valley from Andries and Michael Kok and went in for cattle and horses, intending to breed horses and sell the progeny, but, in spite of being offered good prices, when the time came to sell they couldn't

bear to part as they had become so attached to all of them, and at one time they had 22 horses.

They rode everywhere and thought nothing of riding 20 or more miles to buy cattle. Once returning from such an expedition they got benighted: it was too dark to go further in fairly thick bush with the newly-acquired herd so they put up a rough fence round the cattle and got a fire going, off-saddled and lay down on the ground with the saddles as pillows, and got a few hours' sleep until the moon rose at 2 a.m., shining as bright as day, and they carried on home.

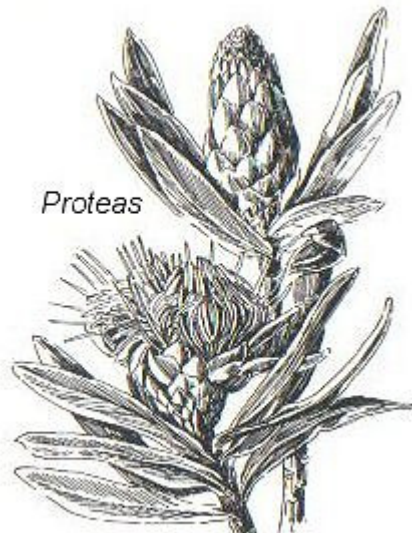
A Riding Club was started, and on Sunday mornings there was the sound of galloping up Belmont drive, and about 18 young people appeared on horse-back. Ted erected jumps on a flat stretch of grassland, and there everyone had lots of fun.

In 1929 G. E. McLeod offered to supply the township with electricity, and his proposal was enthusiastically received by the V.M.B. The matter was considered throughout the year, but in December the whole scheme fell through, as also did Lethbridge's fresh scheme the following year.

Chapter 14

Melsetter, with its main road still very bad and the internal ones mostly non-existent, was now right into the motorcar era. Many difficulties described went on beyond the 1930s, and travelling continued to be a hazardous experience. The road over the mountains was narrow, steep, winding and muddy or dusty according to weather. Everyone tried to avoid travelling towards Cashel on R.M.S. days, because it was a most unpleasant experience to meet a Railway lorry round a corner when one's own car was on the outside of the road and there was only just room to pass one another and a terrifying drop on one's own side of the road.

For the 98-mile journey to Umtali four hours were allowed for an uninterrupted run, but punctures and other mishaps often lengthened the time, and a day return trip was seldom attempted. The condition of the road was a



constant cause of concern and complaints were also made about the gates which were a distinct setback to tourists and so tedious to regular users.

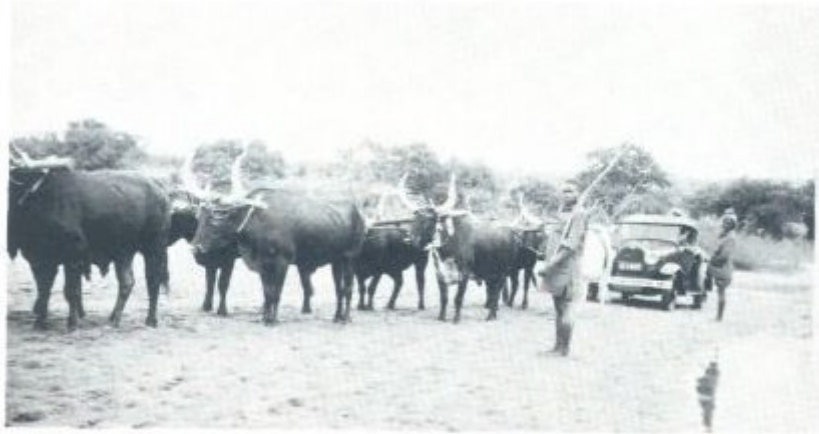
During the early 1930s a great improvement was the laying of strips for the first 25 miles from Umtali to the Mpudzi river, when the very bad sandy stretches which had caused so much trouble were at last eliminated. Strip roads were an advance, but there were snags: the verges were apt to become very washed-out, the clouds of dust which rose up as cars and lorries came off the strips to pass one another could be very dangerous, and the roads were laid on tracks which had grown up with oxwagon traffic and wound in and out of trees and round any obstructions so that there were many dangerous blind bends.



The Motor Car Era

On trips away one never knew whether one would get back on the day planned, and everyone always took blankets, a kettle and iron rations in case one was stuck for the night, and chains and spades were normal equipment. Floods and swollen rivers held travellers up, and roads were turned into impassable bogs or rendered so slippery that cars skidded broadside down the hills. On occasion travellers had to abandon their cars and walk home, slipping and sliding in the dark on the muddy roads.

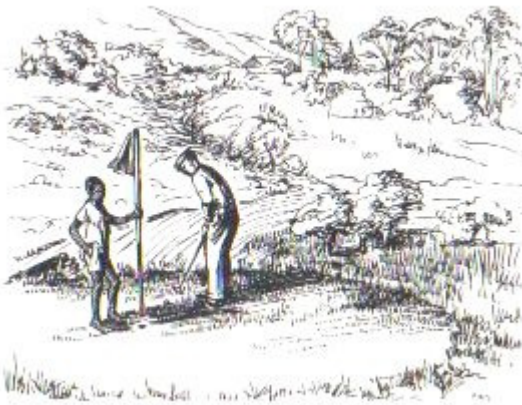
In 1930 the Road Motor Service was accelerated: the lorries left Umtali at 7.15 am. and arrived at Melsetter at 5.15 p.m. The European passenger fare for the circular route. Umtali-Melsetter-Chipinga was advertised at £4. Passenger accommodation was two seats in the cab beside the driver, on which three people could just be squeezed in. A few months later the circular trip was improved by the introduction of two lorries fitted with semi-passenger bodies to accommodate 6-8 passengers and to carry about two tons of mail and parcels. Tickets for the three-day round trip, including hotel accommodation at Chipinga and Melsetter, then cost about £5.



The Sabi drift

Travelling to or from the west the Sabi river had to be crossed by the Sabi Drift which was open for motor traffic during the dry season, usually from May but some years the river was at the deep water stage until July. A span of oxen was kept on the Fort Victoria side to tow motorists across for £1, and was summoned by ringing a gong and beating a drum kept on the river banks or banging on a big sheet of iron hanging from a tree. Crossing the mile-wide drift was supposed to take about half an hour, but travellers had to allow another hour for the oxen to be collected and in-spanned and, if necessary, brought across to the east bank. The in-spanned oxen drew the car over the sandbanks and through the water, which in places came through the floor into the car and it was in- advisable to carry luggage on the runningboards. The ox driver watched the car's front wheels carefully and directed the car driver to keep in line with the direction of travel.

Rose retired and Dr. Kennedy was posted here as District Surgeon for a short period, and then Melsetter was without a doctor for some months until Dr. D. M. MacRae took over in 1931.



Many efforts were made to get a golf course going, and during the decade courses were laid out in front of the hotel and near the racecourse on which games were played, but interest flagged, revived and flagged again. Occasional games of rugby and hockey were played on the Sports Ground. The Gymkhana Club was very active, with the annual Meeting a very big event well supported by local and outside horses and riders.

The Tennis Club prospered although the courts in the dip between The Gwasha and the School road had two big disadvantages: the sun was off them by about 3 p.m., and the stream which flowed between them washed away part of both

courts for many years. The Club paid the V.M.B. 1/- a year rent and 10/- a month for upkeep until 1936, when the Club was charged 10/- a year for the lease and kept up the courts themselves. Matches against Chipinga and Cashel were played frequently, and many happy tennis afternoons ended with a singsong around the hotel piano, and the service hatch between bar and lounge has memories for many Melsetter residents who passed through it.

By 1930 there had been a distinct rise in the value of land: applications for loans showed that land was being acquired at prices up to 500% above its previous value, which was attributed to

the improvement of roads, but in Parliament John Martin protested strongly at the continued neglect of Melsetter by the Agricultural Department.

Miss Elmina Doner came straight from Canada to Rusitu Mission in June 1930. From Umtali she travelled on the Railway lorry with the Rev. Clyde and Mrs. Dotson to Melsetter, where Hatch met them with a new 5-ton lorry which was still an event in the district. The three boys in the back had every little while to get out and work on parts of the road, filling washouts and removing boulders, and it took most of the day to reach Rusitu.

Dotson was the Station head and a man of all jobs. In the school Elmina joined Alma Gahm who had come in 1926 and Lillian Taylor who had started there in 1929. Elmina taught in a little mud hut which had small holes for windows; a board painted black stood near the door; and at a table down the middle sat the nine pupils. They were teen-agers from 12 up, one of whom is now a doctor and another a teacher; they used scratchy pencils on slates, and had one small English book for each to learn the English language.

Nursing under those conditions was not easy, and the fact that Elmina had taken a nursing as well as a teaching course was very useful because there were lots of emergencies. One crisis was when Ruth Dotson, aged about two, had fever. Katie Allen, the nurse, did everything possible for her, but at last had to tell the parents that they must try to get her to Mount Silinda Hospital. Mr. and Mrs. Dotson started out that night with Ruth and Miss Allen. The Nyahode river on Bloemhof was very full but they drove in and just about in the middle they stuck on a boulder, the engine died, and there they sat with the flood



waters rushing past, sometimes almost lifting the lorry. There was nothing to do but pray, and next morning Fred Delaney pulled the lorry out with oxen. When it was dried off they were at last able to get on to Mount Silinda, where Ruth recovered.

It was difficult to get patients to come for treatment, especially the women, as their husbands would not allow them to come to the maternity hospital to have their babies, and when they were nearly at death's door they sent for assistance and it was then so often too late to be able to help them.

During the rains the Mission was sometimes completely cut off when the Nyahode river was in flood. Once when they could not cross all the Mackenzies who farmed on Killin and all the Rusitu folks stayed at Olive Cliff, where Mrs. Delaney kindly spread two rooms full of blankets and they slept on the floor. Other friends who were most welcoming and kind were the Cronwrights in Melsetter.

On a visit to Mozambique a group, with Mission pupils as carriers, walked 150 miles on a preaching and inspection tour, trying to find the people and acquaint them with the mission and its aims. They had stopped in the forest and got everything out ready to eat when suddenly they heard the growl of a leopard close by. In complete silence everything went back into the baskets, the baskets onto the carriers' heads, and all moved off very quickly.

Another time Elmina was the only European on an expedition when they heard elephants tearing down trees and pulling off branches, but could not see them clearly because of the forest. The leader signalled for her and the girls to get well to one side, while he and the boys lined up on the side nearer the elephants and they carried on. Later she asked one of the boys, who was armed with a little stick about two feet long, what he would have done if the elephants had charged. "Oh", he said, "I don't know. But anyway they would have killed us boys first."

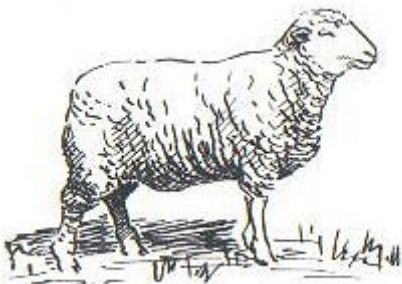
There were many firsts in those ten years: The first woman to come to hospital to have her baby there, who spread the word around: "Oh, it is just wonderful how you are taken care of; you just lie there, and everything is done for you." The first twins who, as the result of Mission teaching, were allowed to live: people watched them for years, expecting some calamity to come to their family, but they grew up and astonished everybody. The first young man to build a house for his bride instead of taking her to his father's home: the old people shook their heads and wondered who would teach her anything. The first permanent roof on an African house, of which the owner was very proud, and went around saying that there would be no more cutting and hauling thatch, and no more leaks in the house. The first woman to have a sewing machine, around whom crowds gathered to get her to sew for them. The first ploughing with oxen, when an old mbuya sat on a rock at the side exclaiming: "Look, look, how fast it goes."

Superstition and ignorance hampered the people, who would eat wild fruits but would not plant fruit trees or make too good a garden in case somebody should bewitch them; nobody thought of making a permanent house and they moved from place to place often for superstitious reasons such as having to move away from spirits if someone got ill. Dotson translated the Bible into chiNdau, assisted by the Rev. Makinase Bgwerudza, the Rev. Mr. Marsh of Mount Silinda, and others.

Melsetter Township was originally laid out with small stands on a grid system, most unsuitable for hilly terrain, and no Commcage plots were laid out. In 1931 the V.M.B. was advised that a new survey was due to be carried out very shortly; and there followed eighteen years of frustration waiting for that survey, while the V.M.B.'s regular and frequent letters were seldom acknowledged and Melsetter suffered from unfulfilled promises and the complete ignoring of its very existence at times, let alone its needs. In 1932 the Secretary for Agriculture in person told the V.M.B. that a representative of the Department would come to select suitable sites for commonage plots, and in 1933 the Minister of Agriculture came to discuss the matter, but nothing further happened.

In the meantime the V.M.B. had immediate problems needing attention. The water supply caused concern, with blockages being attributed to various causes: residents diverting the furrow at unauthorised times, moles, dead frogs, porridge being washed in it, the furrow being diverted to a resident's fowl-run, and horses drinking and crossing:

the N.C. threatened to forbid horses being kept in the village if there were continual complaints about the water but it was pointed out that this would be a great hardship to people who rode in and wished to off-saddle there. The Watercart to the Police Camp did not comply with the Width of Tyre Ordinance and so damaged the roads. The water supply was doubled through work at the source, and an experiment was carried out of paving a section of the furrow with stone, with piping under the bridge.



Merino Sheep

The stream between the Police Camp and the village was dammed and an open-air swimming-bath was opened. The Dutch Reformed Church objected to there being no shelter round it as they considered it a threat to moral life. The V.M.B. disagreed with this view, but a few months later the project had to be abandoned in any case as the dam would not hold water.

The upkeep of the roads was a matter of longstanding

concern, with wheel-harrows the main equipment although on occasion a scotchcart and four mules was hired at 1 / - a load for carting gravel for the streets.

The early-planted gum and cypress trees needed constant attention. Silver wattles kept on getting out of hand and having to be eradicated: each time this was done success was reported but each time the success was short-lived, and fireguards were also a recurrent problem.

In the 1930s Dr. MacRae was foremost in advocating the planting of ornamental trees, and was supported by the V.M.B. in arranging for pruning and tidying and labour. Over 1 200 trees were planted on the commonage in 1932, and a further 1 000 cypresses in The Gwasha grounds.

In 1931 the Chipinga Magistracy was established and was then independent of Melsetter. The V.M.B. agreed to act as the Memorial Hall Committee, and their first move was to re-open the library with an annual subscription of 10/ 6d per family. They spent £10 on books, more money of shelving, and a Library sub-committee was formed. A plaque was attached to the front wall of the Hall:

1914— 1919

IN HONOURED MEMORY OF

J. D. BINDE A. L. BRADBURY J. P. GIFFORD H. C. LOWRY

A. MAYNE T. J. PINE-COFFIN H. J. SIMPSON

MEN OF MELSETTER DISTRICT

WHO NOBLY RESPONDED TO THE CALL TO ARMS

AND WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS.

A serious outbreak of A.C.F. occurred on Tilbury and all adjacent farms were infected. Following an outbreak in the Veterinary Experimental Camp all cattle on the Commonage were ordered to be slaughtered, but the V.M.B. asked for one month's notice because of the difficulties of transporting milk and fuel to the School Hostel and the village.

Sheep experts from the Union reported that Melsetter was perhaps the best district for sheep and wool, and wool exported to England realised an average of 9d per lb. Hanmer Brothers' Wool Sales Report said that competition for their wools was excellent, with the wool in very good dry condition, well classed and packed. Shearing in September was a very busy time on many farms, and for some years a Government Sheep Officer was stationed in Melsetter.

The Cemetery, for which the V.M.B. constituted themselves a Board of Trustees, was dedicated by Bishop Paget in 1932. Its upkeep continued to be a problem, with special efforts made usually only when someone complained about the state of neglect. The V.M.B. planted trees round the border, had the graves tidied and numbered, the grass cut, the fireguards put in order, kikuyu planted, and the site fenced, and in 1933 they fenced the Pioneer Cemetery on Stand 6.

On an occasion when Dr. Rose was taking his daughters and other girls back to school and his son Bill was going to Umtali High for the first time, Bill leaned out in fascination to watch the wheels churn through the water as they were going through a deep rocky drift. He leaned out too far, and when the car lurched he fell out. The girls screamed but Dr. Rose calmly continued to negotiate the tricky passage. When he had got the car safely through to the other side he stopped and waited. A very bedraggled small boy climbed into the car, to renewed shrieks from the girls

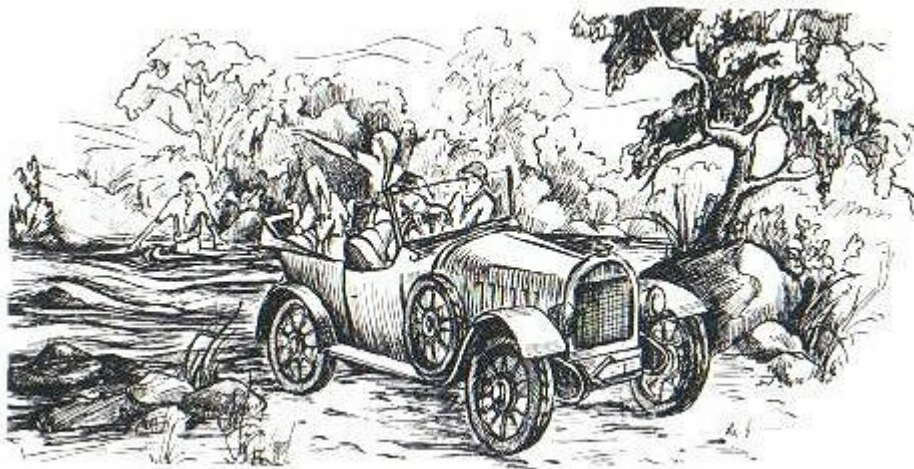
as they drew away from his wet form. Dr. Rose said calmly: "I wouldn't advise you to do that again, Bill. Next time you might not be able to get out", and drove on.

In 1932 work was started on fencing the Commonage, with grids erected; a very narrow road was put through to the Waterfall which replaced the footpath; the new Racecourse was laid out and blazed through the virgin veld; and work was done on the road to Springvale and the Goat Track was built through Alicedale and Hillside to connect with it as the Rusitu Mission access road.

The whole district was closed to cattle movement because of A.C.F., but with little infection on the commonage, all village cattle were moved to fresh kraals on the Chipinga road with dipping continued at the village dipping tank. Rocklands, a cattle depot for the Imperial Cold Storage Co., was infested with A.C.F. Cattle-slaughtering was the policy, and farms were ringfenced and police-patrolled. With the necessary dipping and checking of cattle the district was divided among the Cattle Inspectors, of whom a tremendous lot came and went, all taking part in all activities and adding to the fun that everyone managed to have whenever there was an opportunity; the Veterinary houses were among the most hospitable when farmers came to town. Hans Heyns, with his great love of horses and no. mileage allowance, chose to do much of his work on horseback whenever the distances allowed: covering his area meant travelling 600 miles a month, getting home to Settler every second Saturday.

Few cash crops were grown owing to distances, cream was often low-graded, and times were hard; had it not been for the sheep many farmers would have had to give up. Debts mounted up, but traders in Umtali, the Land Bank in Salisbury, and Cronwright with his store in Melsetter, showed great courage in supporting the farmers.

Efforts were made to build up good herds in spite of the ever-present threat of setbacks. G. J. van Riet came on one of his regular visits to his Melsetter farms and made a gift to the district of one dozen pedigree bulls and one dozen Border-Leicester rams, and Allott bought three pedigree bulls and a stud stallion.



Fruit had done so well from planting material brought up by the trekkers and from later importations that many expanded their orchards, and a Fruit-Growers' Association was formed in 1932. Miss A. L. Cruikshank, who had started a dried fruit industry on Bland's Folly in 1924, supplied a small assortment of dried fruits for despatch to the Beit Railway Trustees in London as an exhibit of what could be done in the district in support of the Sabi Bridge campaign, and also exhibited regularly at Salisbury and Bulawayo Shows. She described her project: "Everything that is made here sells, and the market is tremendous. All the fruit that is not good enough for drying is made into jam. I have 1,225 lbs for sale, and am only waiting for attractive labels for the tins.

Dried vegetables are also going ahead in Northern Rhodesia. The evaporators are in working order, and a motor lorry is being obtained to fetch from the farms, paying cash."

She had a neat little pamphlet printed; unfortunately no prices are marked on the extant copy: "PURE DRIED FRUIT & VEGETABLES ETC. FROM MELSETTER. Dried Fruits, whole: apples, peaches, prunes, figs. Dried Fruits, halved: apricots, pears, plums, bananas, peaches. Dried Apples (for Jam). Fresh Fruit: apples, peaches, apricots, plums and pears. Jams in 2-lb tins: peach, apricot, plum, quince, marmalade, apple jelly, quince jelly. Dried vegetables in tins: all varieties."

In October R. F. Windram wrote an article on Melsetter for The Field, using Miss Cruikshank as the most likely line as she provided good publicity copy. Windram, whose father had been stationed here previously as a Cattle Inspector, was the first Beit Scholar of Melsetter School. On this occasion he travelled by pushbike from Fort Victoria and after his visit wrote a number of publicity articles on Melsetter.

Over the years the V.M.B. made every possible effort to advertise Melsetter's attractions. They encouraged and, when necessary, criticised Our Local Correspondent. For a publicity campaign in 1932 they contributed £10 and collected donations from the Hotel and from Chipinga, spent £6 on having postcards of Melsetter views printed, lent the FA. £31 for printing a brochure, and had a write-up of the district compiled. Close touch was kept with the Umtali Publicity Association, although it was difficult to attend meetings in Umtali.

Captain Allott bought the hotel, hoping to provide more attractive accommodation for tourists, boost the district, and provide an outlet for Belmont farm produce. H. W. Steel managed it, and advertised the attractions under the heading "A Call to Melsetter" offering accommodation from 12/6d a day. Among the visitors who came were Cabinet Ministers and other officials, and local problems including the need for a Cottage Hospital were raised on every possible occasion.



In 1932 an armed commando under Lieutenant-Colonel du Preez, D.S.O., M.C., met the Governor and his party two miles out and escorted them to the hotel, where local residents and the schoolchildren received them. Over the years all the Governors came with parties of their own retainers and senior Government officials and visited the School, farms and the Waterfall, had picnics and horserides and attended indabas. Garden parties at The Gwasha were attended by up to 330 local residents, with volunteers providing the food and necessary hardware items; these pleasant occasions were usually held as planned, but sometimes the party had to be held in the Memorial Hall because of inclement weather.

Dances at the hotel in the evenings were regular features of the occasion. Dress at all the functions was formal: medals, hats, suits, gloves, and long evening frocks and dinner jackets or tails at the dances. The V.M.B. steadily pressed for improvements: the personnel changed, but years of faithful and conscientious service were given by many who served in this frustrating job. Until 1932 members were elected at Ratepayer's meetings, but after this they served until they retired or were transferred and when a vacancy occurred the V.M.B. nominated members.

The Board asked the F.A. to nominate two of its members to the V.M.B., but this was not done, and when later the F.A. criticised the V.M.B. very severely for its conduct of affairs the V.M.B. resigned in a dignified manner. A new Board, of the N.C., the G.M.O., and the Predikant, was appointed and held its first meeting in 1934 when the friction had died down, and gradually the size of the Board was again increased.

The V.M.B. was expected to run the affairs of and provide services for the township, and yet could make few moves without Government approval and assistance, and that co-operation was seldom speedily or readily forthcoming. It had slender financial resources, very limited borrowing powers, and little hope of repaying loans because there were so few ratepayers. All activities were hampered by lack of finance, and there were constant references to the gloomy financial outlook and serious financial difficulties.



The collection of Village Fees was a problem as many residents were dilatory in paying their dues. Small amounts of revenue were received from the sale of firewood cut on the commonage, which in the 1930s cost 7/6d a cord when the V.M.B. had it cut and 3/- if residents cut it themselves, and Nieuwenhuizen carted the wood at 4/- a cord. Another small source of revenue was from leasing the quarry site and the brickfields, for which the most suitable site was chosen after analysis of soil samples.

The charge for numbers of stock on the commonage above free grazing rights was reduced to 3d a head for large and 1d a head for small: Cronwright stressed the need for a lot of cattle to keep the commonage from becoming a wilderness and was a great advocate of free grazing, but others felt that the V.M.B. needed the revenue, and the charge remained. Stock were supposed to be properly herded and kept out of the township, but many were the complaints about cattle and horses not being properly controlled and straying into the village and damaging gardens: the Board frequently circularised owners in terms of relevant bye-laws and Government regulations and sometimes threatened prosecution.

The V.M.B. gave continued consideration to the possibility of piping the water but funds could never be found for the purpose; they chose the hillside site between the Police Camp and the Sports Ground for a location; for years they kept the Nachmaal camp fenced and in proper repair; they asked regularly for a Bank Agency; and they continued to investigate the possibility of installing electricity.

In 1933 Melssetter was cut off by washaway when the Tandaai bridge was washed away, and once more mails had to be brought to the edge of the gap by car and across the river by carriers and taken on by another car on the other side.

John Olivey pressed for the Pork Pie road to be built both as a scenic drive and for access to Sawerombi, and the Roads Department surveyed and laid it out with a £10 contribution from the

V.M.B. It was always a difficult road to keep up, and John had continually to ask for assistance with repairs and maintenance. Before Ann Olivey's death in 1937, it was a common sight to see her riding on horseback to Melsetter with little Annabel perched in front of her.

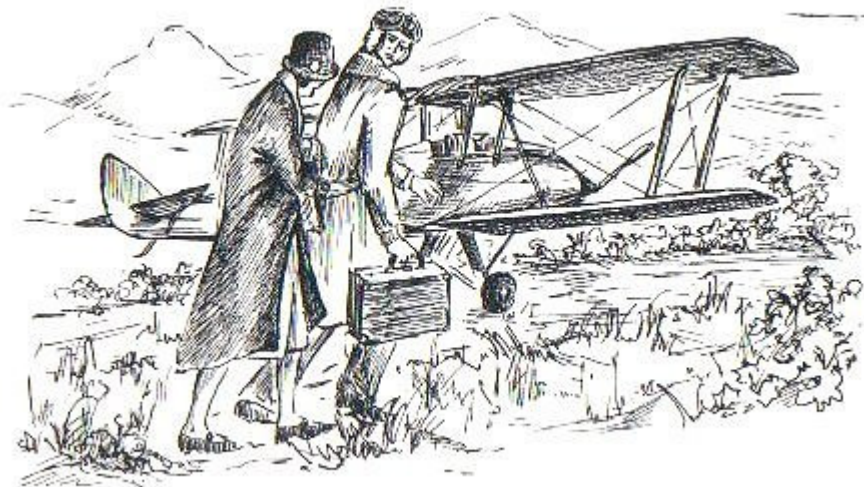
In 1933 the Farmers' Association elected a Vigilance Committee for A.C.F. eradication and John Martin raised the subject in the House, saying that dipping had failed, slaughtering should be the only policy, and the Government had been half-hearted in carrying out any policy. A Commission of Enquiry was appointed.

As a result of A.C.F. and quarantine difficulties on Rocklands, with trained oxen fetching only 10/- a head, young Marthinus Martin decided not to stay; John Martin was sad at the decision, but put nothing in the way of his son's departure.

Over the years locust invasions severely damaged crops including wheat (which in 1932 was 23/3 a bag for truck loads). In 1933 there were swarms throughout the district and hoppers on the Commonage; the V.M.B. organised a campaign with two rangers who destroyed 70 swarms in Muwushu Reserve, but shortly afterwards 15 square miles from Rocklands to Weltevrede were invaded, and it was reported that the locusts were being eaten by white ants and baboons.

Other crop pests included small finches, and horsesickness was an anxiety. A champion rat known as the Hudo in chiNdau, 28" from tip to tail, was killed at The Gwasha: the previous largest killed in Rhodesia was 27", at Mazoe. In The Gwasha's excellent orchard, which included olive trees, a constant watch had to be kept on the fruit during the season so that the baboons who lived up the mountainside did not take the lot. Violets could never be grown next to the house as the buck which were often seen in the garden had a liking for them.

Reports were very frequent of the presence of pythons and eagles, of depredations by baboons and wild pig, and of the harassing of stock by leopards and wild dogs. Farmers kept packs of dogs specially for hunting leopards, and many farmhouses had their tally of leopard skulls and tanned skins.



In 1933 the first aeroplane landed in Melsetter, when Hallam Elton from Thaba Nchu landed his Gipsy Moth on the Racecourse. Everyone went down to welcome him. He made a beautiful landing, and after having a cup of tea he took off again. As he tore down the course the slope seemed too much for him, but he managed to get into the air before it was too late, and slipped

over the top of Pork Pie and disappeared. Hallam and his wife Beryl used sometimes to fly over to Melsetter for a game of tennis.

On one occasion Hallam made a mercy flight. On Fairview eight-months' old Janet Hanmer was seriously ill with enteritis, and Dr. Rose told her parents that he could do no more for her. Bill drove as fast as he could down the four miles to Lemon Kop which had the only outside telephone in the district, on the Melsetter-Chipinga line, to ask Hallam to come quickly. Bill drove straight home again after telephoning, and found that Hallam, having landed on the road, had got there before him. Hallam flew Peggy and her baby to Umtali, where Janet recovered in hospital. (In 1935 Hallam Elton flew under the Birchenough Bridge roadway.)

The need for a landing ground was stressed, and the Director of Civil Aviation visited Melsetter to select a site near the commonage. Elton was invited to meet him, but apart from a site on Rocklands being considered, nothing further was done.

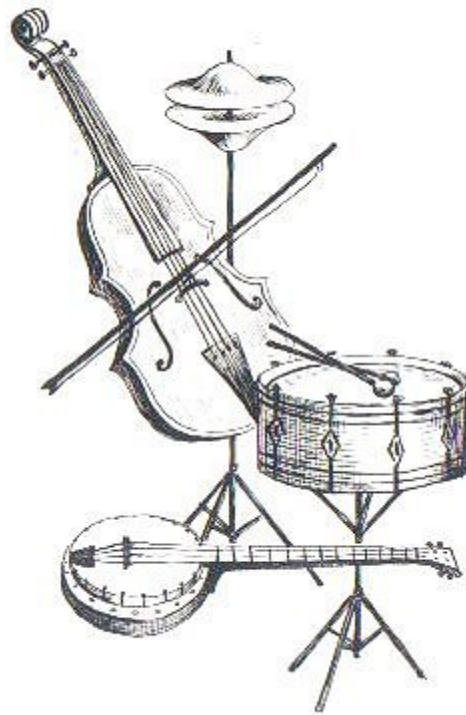


The V.M.B. bought 5000 Rainbow trout ova for £10 from Kingwilliamstown, and hatching pools were made below the Residency, at Rocklands and on Fairfield. The following year fingerlings were released at the Waterfall, in Elandspruit and in the Nyahode river, and the V.M.B. ordered a further 5 000 ova after recovering the £20 which the venture had cost through sales of fingerlings. In due course fish were caught as the trout did well, and in later years more were hatched and released in many other rivers.

The Memorial Hall was gradually finished with money raised with fetes and dances, and was valued at £500 in 1933. The Library doubled as the V.M.B. Secretary's office at £1 a month rent, and the V.M.B. had a table made for £2.5/-, which is still in use today as the Librarian's table. A piano was bought and 6d an hour was charged for practising and £1 for hiring the piano away from the hall: whether it should be moved at all was a matter of discussion, as moves undoubtedly damaged it and references are frequent to its bad state and the need for retuning and repair. Various charges for the hire of the hall were laid down, which became more or less stabilised at £1 for any occasion. The regulations varied frequently: in 1932 the Hall was not to be free for any charitable purpose and no distinction was to be made: charges were for religious services as well as other occasions; no liquor was to be brought onto the premises; no nails were to be driven into the walls, and hirers had to tidy up and clean the rooms within a reasonable time after use. In 1933 it was decided that all sports meetings should be held free of charge, and in 1934 that young people could have free use for private entertainment.

The Ladies' Entertainment Committee (L.E.C.) was started in 1933 with an annual subscription of 2/ 6d. A small Dover stove was installed in what had been the reading room of the Memorial Hall, and with this kitchen as headquarters L.E.C. members catered for many occasions and ran the children's Christmas Tree each year.

The Rhodesië Christelike Vrouens Vereeniging (R.C.V.V.) — the Dutch Reformed Church Women's Association — co-operated in the Christmas Tree parties, and their excellent bazaars were outstanding occasions at which the standard of goods offered for sale was very high.



Chapter 15

In March 1934 a large leopard was seen disposing of a goat on the road opposite Lindley, and Abraham Olwage went to the spot with some natives and two small dogs. He stood in the road while the dogs went into the bush after the leopard and when it charged with them over the embankment Olwage was caught up in the rush. He was knocked over, his hands and arms were lacerated by the leopard, and his rifle slipped to the ground.

While the dogs continued to worry the leopard Olwage had time to recover and fire, but it escaped after also wounding both dogs severely. Olwage was taken to Umtali hospital, where he had one finger amputated and the other wounds treated during the six months he had to spend there.



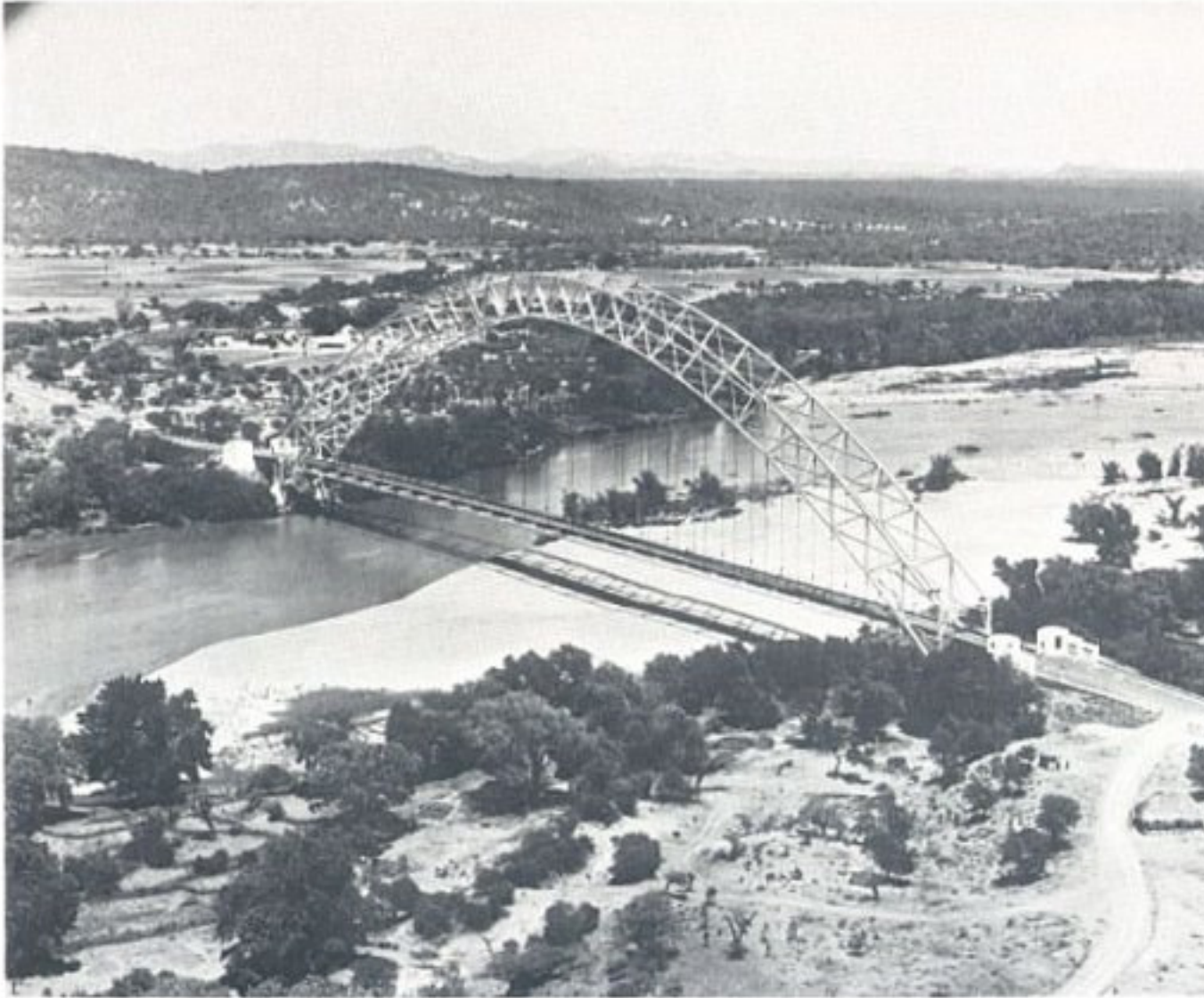
Black Eyed Bulbul

Coffee was grown regularly in small quantities on many farms for home use; J. L. Martin for many years reaped a very good annual crop from his little plantation, and Allott had 100% success with seedbeds of *Coffea Arabica* and planted out 1 000 trees in 1934.

Hanmer planted his first 1 000 apple trees on Fairview, and expanded his orchards over the years. He had very good results from apple sales and turned the surplus into cider, which seemed so innocuous and was so pleasant in flavour that its potency was frequently not immediately realised. In December local wireless enthusiasts listened in to the Duke of Kent's wedding, which despite rainy weather was clearly and distinctly heard.

From 1935 Melssetter's most senior Government official was the Assistant Native Commissioner.

That year the Allotts decided to run the hotel themselves: they had had no previous experience, but won a good reputation. They installed electricity, erected ten prefab bedrooms which had been the living quarters during the building of Birchenough Bridge, and in 1938 put in the swimming bath, put up a private telephone line between the hotel and Belmont, and built the new diningroom where dances were then always held although concerts and plays were still put on in the Memorial Hall.



Birchenough Bridge

The Allotts had a dance band of local talent, with up to six different instruments, which was in great demand for all dances in the district. The Umtali Advertiser reported on a delightful evening spent by tourists at a well-organised dance with a band better than many in more sophisticated parts; a sketch was charmingly interpreted by Josie and Rosemary Allott, and the song was delivered in good voice by Bert Pike, and an encore demanded by a delighted and surprised

audience. A bushbuck once wandered into the lounge, got frightened, and jumped through a closed window: as it was badly maimed it had to be shot.

Consideration was again given to a road through the Chimanimani Pass to connect Melsetter with Vila Pery, and John Martin took the Minister of Finance and the Postmaster-General on horseback to view the proposed route, but no further move was made.

On Albany Captain W. H. Boshoff reported a phenomenal infestation of snakes which had attacked cows, and "one milch cow was bitten in the udder seven times and recovered completely each time under treatment with paraffin and Condy's crystals." In two weeks more than 20 snakes were killed, and Boshoff thought that an even greater number had escaped.

In June 1935 there was an unusually severe frost in the Nyahode valley, and in August snow fell on Fairview and Sawyerombi.

For years Melsetter and Chipinga farmers, supported by Umtali industry, municipality and agriculture, pressed for a proper outlet across the Sabi River, which was, at risk, fordable for only four months of the year. In 1931 a site was selected for a bridge estimated to cost £30 000, but the Government had no funds, so the Beit Railway Trust was approached, Sir James McDonald visited Melsetter, and the case was put to him by residents. A local Committee then circulated the whole Eastern Districts asking for letters, facts, or any support in order to furnish the Trustees with a complete statement of the benefits that would accrue.

Helpful memoranda and facts were received and the Committee sent full details regarding population and farming, with Miss Cruikshank's exhibit, to London. An engineer visited the Sabi, and in 1934 it was formally announced that the Beit Railway Trust would build the bridge, and work was begun. Meantime Melsetter pressed for a road via Fairfield and Admiral so that benefit might be derived from the bridge, but apart from a very rough track to the 85 mile peg on the Sabi road nothing was done. In December 1935 the Birchenough Bridge was opened, then the third longest single span bridge in the world.

1936 started off brightly: there had been no A.C.F. cases since early 1932 and restrictions had been lifted in 1935, but hopes were dashed with fresh outbreaks on Lavina's Rust and Bok Kraal.

A meeting of all Eastern District Farmers' Associations pressed the need for more veterinary staff. The C.V.S. said that some relief was being arranged for Melsetter whereby guard area cattle would be allowed to travel under certain conditions, and he thanked the Melsetter Veterinary Advisory Board for their assistance.

Cattle sent to Umtali for slaughter were quarantined for 14 days before departure and objections were made to their detention for a second inspection at Mpudzi, where there was sometimes a three-day delay in a place devoid of grazing with a resultant serious loss of condition. Representations were made for a return to the previous custom of walking them straight through to Umtali, but it was not until 1942, when wartime petrol rationing restricted travel, that inspection at the Mpudzi was cancelled.

In spite of drawbacks there was an improvement in cattle prices, and oxen were sold for £5 to £6.10 each.

An exhibit from Melsetter at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg included tea, wool, cheese, wheat, bottled fruit and native craftwork. A bale of Fairview wool created such a favourable impression that enquiries resulted regarding the price of land in the district.



Pat and Shirley Sinclair

Some cases of diphtheria among the Africans on the Commonage caused concern, but inoculations were carried out and the epidemic was soon cleared up.

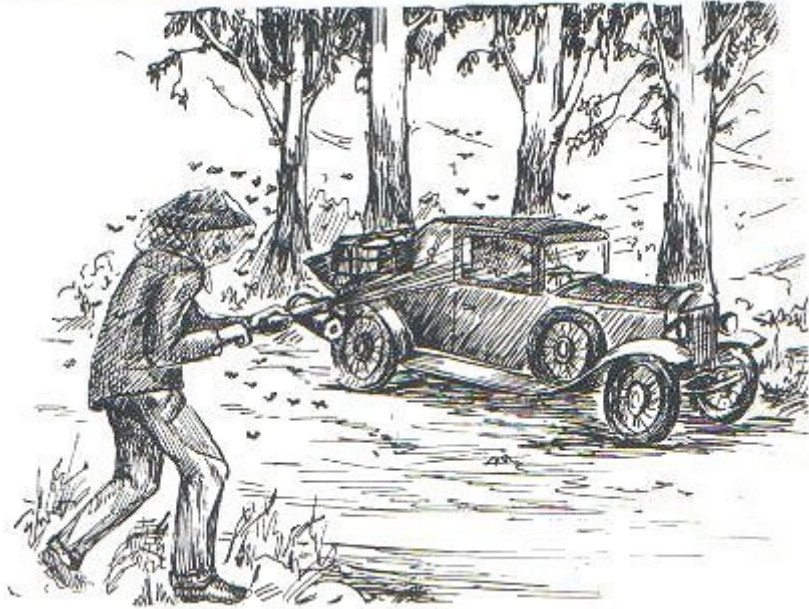
Concrete beacons, numbers 48A to 76, were erected on the boundary with P.E.A. In November a cloudburst on Moodie's Nek resulted in the Tandaai river rising 30'.

Dr. J. P. Ziervogel bought Orange Grove and Roede for his son, who was killed a few years later in the War. His manager, S. M. (Pat) Sinclair, set up camp on Orange Grove, and spent the next few months fencing, buying cattle, planting pastures, buying sheep—including 600 at 8/6d each from Koos Papenfus—and importing two Corriedale rams. Schalk Kloppers built the stone house, and Giellie Bredenkamp took over the farm management while Pat went off to get married, when he returned with Shirley.

Bees have frequently been a hazard. In January 1937 they swarmed in the roof of the Veterinary offices, and D. V. S. Nixon arranged for them to be smoked out one night, and the building caught fire and was destroyed; it was later rebuilt. The Umtali Advertiser reported that all furniture and records were saved, but the reply to a recent request for access to old records was that they were all burned in Nicky's fire.



A bee invasion occurred when John Olivey drove in to load his wool: when the bees swarmed the R.M.S. driver abandoned the trailer and drove his lorry away to Umtali, the village was as if deserted with all houses closed and not a soul in sight, and John's car stood abandoned with the swarm settled on his wool bale. Bert Pike, then Postmaster, thought that with the aid of a small piece of mosquito netting and a flit pump he would be able to disperse the little devils, but they soon fixed him with a sting on the point of his chin. Exit the Postmaster. The Post Office had to be locked up by the office messenger and the keys taken over to the house, and no postal services were available for that day. John managed to shed the bale, acquired some sacks for protecting his head and arms, and drove round the village like a Ku Klux Klan figure.



The Post Office consisted of two rooms, one with the counter and the inner one with the safe and telephone and telegraph apparatus. The telephone line connected with Chipinga and Umtali direct. Most people called for mail: there were no private boxes, but there were a few Private Bags. Mail sorting, at very erratic hours depending on the lorry's arrival, was very frequently done by lamplight after dark.

During the Coronation celebrations F. E. Cronwright was warmly congratulated by all on receiving a Coronation Medal for services rendered to Melssetter. He was a quiet retiring man, full of the wisdom of experience, and always turned away from any unpleasantness but was always ready to help.

It was hoped that the name Melssetter Waterfall would be kept for this scenic attraction and the V.M.B. said that those who called it Bridal Veil should be corrected, but this was a losing battle as much publicity had been received for the Bridal Veil Falls. The V.M.B. looked after the site, and bought the iron scat which is still there for £4 in 1937. They also spent £3 on repairing the road from the hotel to the Orange Grove commonage gate, and the Roads Department built the road to van Bilion's farm Orals Krantz.

A memorandum was submitted to the Government on the plight of the Melssetter Chipinga area, detailing the hardships which had so often previously been mentioned, and appealing for assistance including long-term loans for fencing.

After some years of silence regarding Town Planning, hopes of progress were raised in 1936 when a Town Planning Officer came in January and promised to follow up the details of his discussion with the V.M.B., but when nothing further was heard John Martin saw the Minister and officials on a number of occasions early in 1937.

At first he was told that the matter would have to wait until the Survey Act was passed. When it had been passed he was told that the surveyor had died; he asked for a private surveyor who was working in the district to be put on to it and was told that the Minister would consider it. Martin found the Department unsympathetic when he brought forward specific applications for plots. The V.M.B. drew up and forwarded a full Memorandum, and when Martin next saw the officer and the Minister he was told that Melssetter would have to wait until Parliament sat again. In July, eighteen

months after his first visit, the officer came again; he had no constructive plans, and his chief concern seemed to be that the Government could not trace all owners of vacant stands, but said these could be sold as soon as the new Act was in force.

The V.M.B. found that the continual dust was quite beyond them: a watercart had been considered but would not be the answer, and they asked if the Government would help them to tar the streets. The Regional Roads Engineer said the Government had helped in some places on the £ for £ system, and advocated the use of Primax or Lomix at about £200 a mile, but the Board's application for financial assistance was turned down by the Department of Mines and Works as the cost was too great. An experiment was tried with applications of oil but no great improvement resulted, and in 1938 stone chips on a village street were tried but progress was very slow with only three boys to crush the stone by hand and the experiment was abandoned. The problem received constant attention, and in 1939 the £450 a mile cost of tarmac material in Melssetter was considered prohibitive. With £60 from the Road Council the drainage was tackled with stone culverts and streets were regularly gravelled.

In spite of the many difficulties social occasions continued to be well supported and welcomed as a respite from the problems. The V.M.B. took over the lease of the Gymkhana and Sports Ground from the Lands Department, applied for a lease for 300 acres for 15-20 years, and sublet at £1 a year to the Gymkhana Club, which had worked and spent a lot of money as the pioneer of the Sports Ground.

With the new Course in full operation and the first permanent building — the weighingroom and secretary's office — erected in 1935, the Meetings set the pattern for Rhodes' and Founders' weekend, when everybody attended all the functions and worked extremely hard to make them a success.

In 1936 the Club arranged camping sites for the weekend. The V.M.B. gave 10/6d for advertising and arranged for wood and water supplies and sanitary facilities. The charges were 2/6d for adults, with children free, and supplies were available of milk at 4d a bottle, butter 1/6d a lb, vegetables 1½d a lb, and eggs 1/- a dozen. Sometimes families camped in the Memorial Hall, bringing in beds, bedding, cooks, food, crockery and cutlery, and of course the children, and it was all great fun.

The weekends started with Tennis Championships on Saturday and Sunday, and the Calling of the Card on Saturday evening was a great occasion, with everybody packed into the small hotel lounge. Sometimes undenominational Church services were held on Sunday.

Monday was the big day with everyone who owned horses entering all the events themselves. It was difficult at times for spectator mothers, with small children at foot or in prams, as it was often very wet and muddy or else such a glorious day that the sun was far too hot and there was no shade anywhere and nowhere to sit except on the ground.

The festivities ended with a dance in the empty Meikle's building, which took a week to convert into a ballroom with a resplendent result. The walls were covered with greenery, flowers arranged in huge pots round the wall, coloured lanterns and decorations hung from the ceiling, the floor was polished to slippery perfection and a bandstand erected.

The Allotts' band was a popular feature, and supper was laid in the adjoining room. The bar, run by the Stewards all day on the course, was set up in the cellar for the dance and stayed open all night. A good time and many arguments were had by all who came for the Melssetter Meeting.

Sometimes for an exceptionally good cinema the Allotts collected friends in their Ford Safari car, which held eight, left at four o'clock, and reached Umtali in time for the eight o'clock show. Afterwards they got thermoses filled with hot coffee and proceeded home, stopping en route for a picnic supper. The journey was enlivened by singing to the accompaniment of guitar and ukelele. They usually got back about 3 a.m., and quite often ended up with a swim in the hotel swimming bath or went on to the Waterfall. Once Rupert Cronwright was dared to, and did, climb up the steep and very slippery side of the Falls.



Jim Sinclair arrives on Albany

Mr. and Mrs. Bothma took over at the School, where keeping the hostel full continued to be a problem. State wards were sent as boarders, many of whom were undesirable and difficult children. Local farmers were unwilling to send their children to the School under its primitive conditions, but Shelagh and June Nethersole did start as boarders in 1939.

In 1938 the Sinclairs bought Albany, on which Boshoff had built a small house. The day they moved to their new home they parked their truck on Heathfield and rode the last five miles on horseback; Jim the six-months' old baby was tied on the nanny's back and she walked. Roadbuilding was only one of the many urgent jobs which needed immediate attention those first years: ploughing (at first with donkeys and a single-furrow plough), fencing, planting, stocking the farm, and getting the house in order, all took time. Pat planted four acres of paspalum and Rhodes grass the first year, the beginning of a later expanded pasture planting programme. In 1939 a magnificent crop of different varieties of wheat was destroyed by locusts.



Patricia and Ken Nethersole

Ken and Patricia Nethersole with their small daughters settled on Springfield, having bought it and Mermaid's Grotto and Forest Glade. Ken planted a peach orchard but it did not pay so he dug out the peach trees and in due course established his excellent apple and pear orchards. Their dam is well stocked with bream and bass and they have established trout in some of their rivers.

The death of John Martin saddened the community. He had been President of the Farmers' Association for nearly thirty years, Member of Parliament for Eastern for fourteen, and was an outstanding leader both nationally and locally and many tributes were paid to his integrity and outstanding gifts.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture met farmers and announced new regulations to stamp out A.C.F.: infected farms were to be fenced immediately, with loans on easy terms, any infected herd was to be placed under Government supervision until it could be disposed of, and 85% compensation would be paid; all expenses of supervision and marketing would be borne by the Government, and, after the removal of the herd, all infected farms were to be kept free of cattle for two years.

Arrangements were made in 1939 for slaughter stock from A.C.F. areas to be transported to Umtali by Railway lorry, the start of what later became routine for all slaughter cattle. Cattle from free areas were driven on the hoof to Umtali, a slow business with many attendant snags: finding drovers, locating strays, watching for sore feet and overtired animals, and following up the herd to check that all was well. Some cattle were even sent on the hoof to Salisbury: after the Birchenough Bridge was built requests were made for the re-opening of the stock route down the Biriwiri valley via the Sabi Bridge and Wedza, joining the main Salisbury road at Bromley.

A circular drive was opened with one-way traffic going down towards Everglades and returning via the Waterfall, with cuttings for cars to pull aside to view the scenery. Users were grateful to G. E. McLeod for allowing a right of way across a corner of Everglades which eliminated any gates. Melsetter was sad when Mrs. McLeod died at Everglades.

Guy Fawkes bonfires on the Market Square were organized some years, and Dingaan's Day was sometimes celebrated, with a very big occasion in 1938 with tent accommodation for approximately 150 people in the village. In 1938 and 1939 preparations were made for a joint celebration in Melsetter, with Chipinga and Cashel, of Rhodesia's Golden Jubilee in 1940, but all plans were cancelled when the War started.

Administration of the Memorial Hall was difficult, and sometimes the V.M.B. managed to get a district Committee to run it but little interest was taken and the V.M.B. Secretary did all the work and administered the Hall funds. In 1939 an application for a grant of £200 for renovations was turned down as the State Lottery Trustees considered this a matter to be dealt with by the local authority. The local authority had no funds, but somehow the money was raised and guttering was erected and painting and pointing done. It was hoped to replace the wooden pillars with brick ones, but they have lasted until 1970.

By 1940, with a new switchboard installed in the Post Office to take the increased traffic, the district was served by three party lines which covered enormous distances and linked the scattered homesteads. Few people in Melsetter have ever had the time or inclination to abuse party lines by listening to others' conversations, but there was once a bad offender. When a neighbour, already carrying on a conversation on the line, heard the click of a receiver, he said: "Frikkie, I can smell you've been eating onions." And Frikkie, taken aback, immediately said: "I haven't."

For Territorial training Melsetter Platoon and Lemon Kop Platoon met regularly at their respective ranges for practice shoots. Weapon Meetings were very busy occasions, with visiting teams from Fort Victoria, Umtali and Chipinga all under canvas for the weekend. In August 1939 a week's military training camp was held at Lemon Kop range, and in September a so-called final shoot was held as it was assumed that all territorials would be serving in the army very shortly but in the event the platoons carried on for some years.

It was not practicable to visit Ebenhaezer at Buffelsdrift every five years as had been hoped, and the Martin Trek Cairn was dismantled and the stones were brought to Melsetter and piled on the village square. The five year anniversary services were then held on the new site, with a camp erected on each occasion for the many visitors. In 1939 the Ebenhaezer Committee started on plans for a more permanent Memorial and stone was quarried on the commonage for the building.

Chapter 16

Territorial activities increased in the months before the declaration of war in September 1939 and all Platoon members were told that if the war did start their services would be required immediately. When war was declared volunteers were disconcerted at the lack of local information for their joining the Forces. Feeling frustrated, they carried on with their normal tasks, and it was gradually learned that the original general call-up was cancelled: so great was the rush of volunteers that Rhodesia brought in conscription in order to keep key men and women on the land and in industry, and all local married farmers were told to stay at home and carry on producing food.



For months they besieged the authorities and pulled any strings they could in order to be allowed on active service but had no success. It took them a long time to accept the fact that their job was at home. They attended annual Commando Training Camps and continued regular Platoon meetings. Farmers were active members of the Food Production Committee and widened their farming operations in order to produce as much food as possible.

Among those who went from Melsetter to serve was Bill Rose, who was killed in action in 1942. Tommy Delaney saw service with the Long Range Desert Group and Frank Bennett with the Reconnaissance Unit. Fred Delaney as a Police Reservist was in charge of the Birchenough Bridge Guard and then on duty on the boundary near Espungabera. John Olivey spent most of the war with the Long Range Desert Group; during a leave in Rhodesia he married Mickey Tollner who had taught at Melsetter and then also joined the Forces; John was awarded the Military Cross and Bar and he and Mickey returned to Sawerombi at the end of the war.

Wartime activities were a background to daily life. Melsetter's fund-raising and other helpful efforts were never-ending and were joined in by everybody: all worked extremely hard to make them a success and enjoyed themselves in the process. They included beetle drives, derbies, dances, fetes, games evenings and sales: Bring and Buy Sales, Cake Sales, Preserve Sales, and Sales of Work. Teas and lunches were sold on every possible occasion.

As travelling was restricted, many activities were crowded in on the occasions when people did meet. On one Saturday in 1945 there was a Farmers' meeting; the W.N.S.L. A.G.M. at 11 a.m.; a W.I. committee meeting at 12 which authorised two members to interview the M.P. in connection with medical facilities; the women sold lunches at the Memorial Hall; everyone played tennis at 2 o'clock; there was a treasure hunt for the children at 3, a bazaar at 4, a braai at 5.30, and dinner and a dance at the hotel in the evening. At some point small children were bathed, supped and bedded down at the hotel, and the following day everyone played tennis before going home in the afternoon.

Funds were raised for knitting for the troops, the Red Cross, troops' Christmas Parcels and the National War Fund. No record has been found of the total which Melsetter raised during these years but one item recorded is £200 for the N.W.F. at the Race Meeting in 1941, and there are references to donations of cattle for which the F.A. arranged the sales. The fund-raising went on after the war, when large contributions were sent to the Food for Britain Fund, the Aid Europe Fund, United Nations Appeal for Children, and the Save the Children Fund.

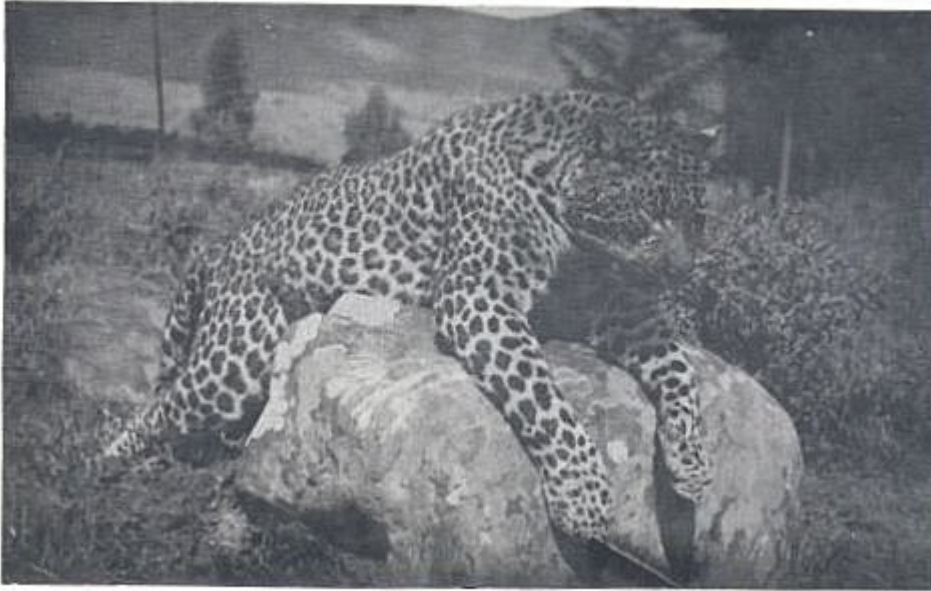
On 11th November 1939 after a meeting of the L.E.C. the Melsetter branch of the Women's National Service League was formed. The W.N.S.L., a voluntary organisation, received Government recognition as Auxiliary to the Defence Scheme. Meetings were held about every two months and members worked at home in between; the membership varied between 10 and 20 in any one year, and during the five years of the war Melsetter W.N.S.L. made and sent off 210 pairs socks, 26 pairs of stockings, 26 pairs of gloves, 23 balaclava helmets, 19 airmen's jerseys, 26 scarves, 61 pairs of pyjamas, 11 ration bags, 53 hold-alls, 13 pairs of mittens, 59 pullovers and 4 seamen's jerseys.

The district also responded to other appeals and sent off clothes, books, magazines, and, one year, 300 lbs of biltong. Individuals sent comforts and wrote long letters to members of their families and their friends with the Forces and sent food to friends and relations in Britain. A Salvage Committee collected everything that could possibly be spared and re-used.

Hospitality was a big item, and the W.N.S.L. arranged accommodation in members' homes for R.A.F. personnel on leave. Many had been put up by 1943, there were 45 in 1943, 18 in 1944 and 11 in 1945. Mrs. Rose's sister, Miss Emily Ward, came from England bringing two nephews and a niece to spend the war years in Rhodesia.

The W.N.S.L. final meeting was on 1st September 1945, and funds on hand were sent to the

Thanksgiving Fund. The knitting carried on to use up stocks of wool on hand, hospitality to R . A. F. and Women's Services continued under the aegis of the W.I., and the Parcels for Britain Fund carried on for some years.



Leopard shot in 1940

Rationing was part of daily lives. Petrol rationing restricted movement, but enough was available for farming and local purposes and all travel further afield was by train from Umtali until petrol was again freely available, after ten years, in April 1952.

Sugar rationing was disconcerting to the farmers' wives who depended on preserving the constant supply of fruit. With a growing family half a pound per head per week did not go very far, but in due course full requirements were allowed under special licence and once again bottling and the making of jam, preserves, chutneys, sauces, jellies, fruit juices, every single month of the year carried on. Everybody tried to be as self-sufficient as possible, and, as most were in any case struggling to make ends meet, the minimum of groceries was bought.

One curious rationing attempt was the Government decision that it would help the war effort if nobody ate eggs after 6 p.m. At the Police Camp the Sergeant got up from table one evening saying: "Well, that was very nice. Why don't we have poached eggs on mashed potato more often?", and his wife replied: "Because I think you had better not break the law too often." This regulation was quietly ignored by all who liked having eggs for supper and did not last for very long as it was impossible to enforce it.

With restricted travelling the telephone party lines were a great boon and enabled scattered homesteads to keep in touch with one another. Wirelasses were powered by 6-volt car batteries, and few people owned more than one battery which therefore had to do duty both in the car and for the wireless, and ingenious plans were worked out for driving the car into a position suitable for the wireless leads to be attached without taking the battery out of the car. When the car was needed, the rest of the family had no radio, and the party line showed its value on one occasion when a wireless was fixed up next to a telephone, receivers were taken off, and a neighbour some 16 miles away was able to listen to Churchill speaking.

Ted and Olive Allott were left to carry on the hotel as best they could with a drastically depleted staff and very little business when Josie joined up as a FANY and Rosemary married Charles Owen. Ted and Olive volunteered for service but were turned down: the hotel was an essential business and had to be carried on. Practically the only visitors were Air Force lads who were put up free, an occasional Government official, one or two permanent residents and the R.M.S. lorry drivers who were a great standby.

Rusitu Mission built an African School in Melsetter.

Two huts were available at the Camping Site at I / - a night for adults and children free, but the set-up was not satisfactory and the upkeep of the huts was a problem.



At The Gwasha the cypress trees had grown huge and were shutting in the house too closely. Dan Koch arranged for labour to strip the branches and fell some trees. When the first one was tackled, the stripper climbed up the tree and chopped off branch after branch as he ascended. Koch arrived home just as he reached the top — obviously with no means of getting down again. Panic. Eventually a ladder and a length of washing-line were procured, and from the top of the ladder — so inadequate against the 40 feet of the tree — the line was at last caught by the stripper, who tied it round himself and with this purely psychological safeguard he managed to shin down the tree.

Horses were kept by many residents. Dan Koch was about the last of the N.C.s to have a horse allowance; no one used the horse, Linda, who was sold by one NC. to the next, but she was a very good mare and several N.C.s had foals from her from a local stallion. The police donkey was an offender in the matter of straying into village gardens, and the V.M.B. asked that it should be transferred to another district as it was such a nuisance here.

The water supply continued to be a problem, and requests for advice were made regularly to

Salisbury. A ratepayers' meeting in 1939 discussed a Government Irrigation Engineer's Report, and, on being assured that redemption and interest on the proposed loan of £250 could be met without increasing the rates, agreed that the money should be borrowed. By the time arrangements had been made the War had started, costs had risen, and the V.M.B. had to borrow £310, to be paid off at the rate of £40.3.0. per annum. By April 1940 most residents had piped water and there were seven standpipes in the village for public use.

Supplies to some houses were still from furrows: at The Gwasha two Bandits filled the tank daily by hand; one scooped the water out of the furrow with a bucket which he handed to the other, who climbed up a ladder and emptied it into the tank, until Koch made a small reservoir above the house which enabled water to be piped to the tank by gravity.

There were occasional visits by Town Planning Officers, Ministers and other officials, some of whom praised Melssetter for its patience and all of whom promised that something would be done about the Town Planning. As nothing was done the hold-up in development was complete and many problems resulted. Applications for stands and plots had to be turned down, or applicants lost interest because of the long delay. The siting of the Veterinary camp, a new rifle range, a new school, district surgeon's house, clinic, cottage hospital, slaughter poles, butchery, postmaster's house, railway depot, a club, a landing ground, the camping site, the African township, children's playground, the water supply and septic tank system were all discussed and had to be left over. Everything had to be shelved waiting for the Town Plan.

On the road to Chipinga a new Beit bridge replaced the black wooden bridge across the Nyahode river in 1940 and the road was realigned to cross it. All police patrols were on horseback until motor vehicles were gradually introduced in the 1940s, including a short spell with motor-bikes which were found not to be ideal on these roads. Improvements were made to the police house which until then had few amenities: one drawback was that, in spite of the magnificent view commanded by the site, the mountains could only be seen from the bathroom window. Gradually all the buildings at the Camp have been improved and increased.

In 1941 the old tennis courts were abandoned when two courts were built in front of the hotel, with a rent of 1/- a year for the stands. The whole Commonage area was inspected for bilharzia, and no signs of infection were found.



The building of the Pioneer Memorial was completed, with the stones from the original cairn built into the side panels, preparations were made for an exceptionally large invasion of campers, and in September 1943 an estimated 400 visitors, including Government representatives, came for the four days of ceremonies for the unveiling of the Memorial. There were services, speeches, games and meetings, and many old friendships were revived. Mrs. Marthinus Martin planted an oak tree but it had later to be removed as professional advice warned that it might damage the Memorial.

The Melsetter-Cashel Road Council split into two separate entities, and Melsetter Road Council worked hard to improve the local roads, which were still all narrow, twisting, winding, steep, troublesome in wet weather, and always slow to travel on. All the rivers were forded by drifts with indifferent surfaces, and all farms were well fenced which meant gates, mostly concertina ones, on all the roads: there were 12 gates in 14 miles on the Nyahode road.

Sheep were doing well on the highveld, and pigs thrive on many farms but the cost of transport for importing food and exporting the product limited their viability. Cattle flourished except for A.C.F. hazards and tsetse fly losses on Springfield in 1945; in 1940 a Branch of the Rhodesian Stock-Owners' Association was formed, and in 1942 Melsetter offered grazing for cattle from drought-stricken Matabeleland.

Dairying looked tempting, but transport killed the profits, and the best line in this connection seemed to be stud herds: a Jersey herd did very well until the bottom later dropped out of the

dairy market throughout the country and there was little demand for high quality stock. Potatoes grew well and sometimes gave an excellent return but there were snags including blight, market gluts and floods.

Soya beans grew well, but in the early 1940s there was little market for them and so no incentive to carry on with the crop. Pyrethrum grew excellently, with a high pyrethrin content according to analysis in Salisbury, but by the time it reached the only market in Durban it was downgraded. Groundnuts grew well but were difficult to reap during the rains as they sprouted in the land before they could be brought in. Oyster nuts, the first known introduction into Rhodesia, were planted on Albany, and the growth was rampant and heavy steel wire trellises were needed; good returns were received from the sale of seedlings and cuttings, but as the result of heavy pruning the vines died. Albany was one of the first farms to market Giant Rhodes Grass seed when it was introduced into Rhodesia. Pasture grasses were planted, but upkeep was expensive, and for those struggling to make ends meet the expenses could not be continued at the time.

On many farms new orchards were established and showed great promise, and in 1946 an Eastern District Fruit-Growers' Association was formed. Many farmers planted pine trees, cedars, gums and cypresses, which grew excellently. Fodder crops were grown regularly, mainly maize and oats.

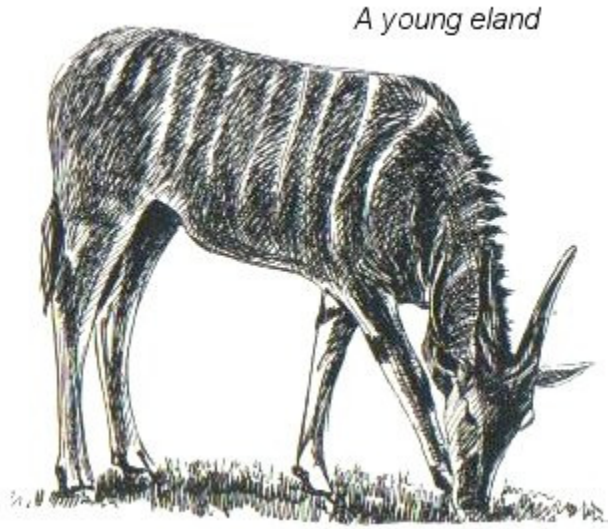


Mr J.A.Kok at a memorial service

Eland damaged some crops, and farmers were told that they were allowed to shoot eland throughout the year on a £1 licence, but were not to abuse the privilege by indiscriminate destruction.

Melsetter was clear of A.C.F. for three years but was disappointingly back into difficulties at the beginning of 1943 with an outbreak on Rocklands, which it was hoped could be controlled and contained, but this was not possible.

Some of the difficulties are shown in Albany's case. In November 1943 two people were given permission to camp on Albany: only much later it was learned that they had come from camping on Rocklands and that they had a small woolly dog with them. Whether the infection was due to their visit will never be known, but it is a strong possibility.



A young eland

Visits from Cattle Inspectors had always been regular on dipping days, and in February 1944 Bill Baker came with ominous news of suspected A.C.F. on Albany, and for the next few weeks he and his wife stayed frequently while Pat and he were very busy getting a good check of all the cattle. The District Veterinary Surgeon from Umtali came, a succession of cattle inspectors visited daily for months, most usually stayed overnight, and a careful watch was kept on the cattle.

No definite A.C.F. signs were found, and in February and March Pat Sinclair exchanged Friesland cows for Shorthorn heifers from Cashel, bought weaners from Dawid Wiese at Cecilton, and sold cattle to Dredge at Skyline. In September came the bad news that Koch's bodies had been found in the slide of a cow which had been sick for six weeks and had died two weeks before. And Albany was in quarantine for A.C.F.

Five-day dipping with daily temperaturing of cattle started immediately and movements of stock on the farm were carefully controlled. Pat built a second dipping tank and put up extra fencing, on the boundary between Albany and Heathfield a double fence was erected with a 50-yard buffer gap, and Veterinary guard boys were on duty at each of the farm exit gates. Successive Chief Veterinary Surgeons came, and when T. Lees May was posted as D.V.S. to Melsetter he and his wife spent much time on Albany.

In November A.C.F. was diagnosed in a sick heifer which had been slaughtered, but the relief was great when a cow was postmortemed in December and poisoning was diagnosed. The anxiety went on: cattle with temperatures at 6 a.m., slides positive, slaughtered. Temperatures suspicious, cattle off colour, slides negative, the cattle left to be carefully watched. A whole span of oxen was slaughtered on suspicion, and the Shorthorn calves were said to have Koch's bodies in the smear, but Pat refused to allow them to be slaughtered, and they showed no further signs of ill-health. A labourer's ox died and A.C.F. was confirmed: that ox had been moved without permission and had infected more veld, which resulted in more anxiety. Telephones hummed and visitors flowed.

Officials were held up in reaching the farm because of flooded drifts: the weather was definitely against any easy handling of cattle with a lot of rain and dreadfully muddy conditions: once an umbrella, of all things, was borrowed to go out and deal with a sick beast. A friend picked a huge

bunch of heath, but she was not allowed to take it off the farm, as nothing could be taken off Albany while in quarantine.



A Melsetter farm

At last, some eighteen months after the final confirmed A.C.F. death, Albany was announced to be out of quarantine. It is impossible to assess the losses, which were actually not great in numbers of cattle dead but other items mounted up: loss of condition of the cattle through constant handling, the inability to run as many cattle as planned, the extra fencing and other farming costs, the extra cost of living, and, all the time, the

anxiety.

The problem of Rocklands where so many outbreaks had occurred exercised people's minds, and the Veterinary Department supported by the farmers recommended that it should form part of a cattlefree zone. In 1945 it was bought by the Forestry Department, and Mrs. John Martin and her son Wickus moved to Inyazura. Since 1945 no known cases of African Coast Fever have occurred in Melsetter.

The need for an African clinic was very great, and hopes were raised in 1941 when the Lands Department set aside ten acres near the Gymkhana ground for the purpose. In 1943 the Department of Health said the African Clinic would be erected as soon as building material was available, but hope receded as no further move was made. Sporadic attempts were made to keep a clinic going, but quarters were inadequate and it was a difficult service to maintain.

In 1944 the question of a War Memorial was considered and the possibility of building a cottage hospital was enthusiastically taken up. The fund opened with subscriptions of £335 and promises from many donors of doubling their contributions once the scheme got off the ground. A festive week in January 1945 raised more, a busy weekend in July produced £100, and by August the Hospital Fund stood at £651.8.0.

Meantime in 1944 the Government at last decided to pay a District Nurse's salary, and Melsetter was fortunate in having the co-operation of Native Commissioners' wives, who ran the service and set aside a room at The Gwasha for a European clinic.

The lack of and urgent need for medical facilities was raised at the W.N.S.L. meeting, but as the subjects did not fall within their terms of reference, the Chairman suggested that a Women's Institute competent to deal with such problems should be formed. The idea was received with enthusiasm and arrangements were made for a visit by the Honorary Organiser of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia (F.W.I.S.R.), today the National Federation of Women's Institutes of Rhodesia (N.F.W.I.R.)

On 2nd December 1944 a well-attended women's meeting heard of the local, national, and worldwide interests of the non-party political and non-sectarian F.W.I.S.R., with its member Institutes formed to enable women to take an effective part in the life and development of the country, and the Melsetter Women's Institute was formed. With an annual subscription of 2/ 6d (this had soon to be increased, and is now \$2), the W.I. started its years of service, its friendly

social contacts, its interest in everything affecting Melssetter and Rhodesia, and its efforts to provide members and others with a very wide range of interests beyond immediate home concerns under its motto "Home & Country".

Membership has varied between 25 and 44 over the years, usually just over 30. The early meetings were held in the hotel lounge, the Anchor lounge, private houses, and later regularly in the Courtroom. Originally they were held every six weeks or two months because of transport difficulties, but gradually the pattern evolved of their being held at the same time as the monthly Farmers' meetings.



Chimanimani Mountains

Besides supporting local efforts for improved medical facilities one the W.I.'s first tasks was to draw up a memorandum on Medical Services in Country Districts in the successful campaign for wider medical aid schemes, and another was to press for much-needed improvements at the School. A keen interest has been maintained in all aspects of life: parochial, national and international.

Sanitation caused concern during the 1940s with the impossibility of finding new staff to replace the two rapidly-ageing members of the night soil disposal squad. The first water closet was installed in the "top house" about 1944. With the unsatisfactory Town Planning set-up and the difficulties of the water supply it was impossible to insist on waterborne sanitation, but gradually residents installed their own and built septic tanks.

In 1944 the Eastern Districts Development Committee was formed and the likelihood arose that the Chimanimani area would be reserved as a National Park. Gideon Martin had always taken every opportunity of exploring the mountains and was always willing to place his services at the disposal of anyone wishing to explore. He took A. C. Soffe and a party up and after their visit the possibilities were publicised and the development of the area discussed.

A narrow tar mat was laid on the first 40 miles out of Umtali but the rest of the road caused much concern and consternation and many complaints were made about it. In 1943 the V.M.B., the F.A. and the Road Council, asked for an outlet towards the west, stressing the unsuitability of the cuttings road as a trade route for farm produce although its scenic attractions were acknowledged.

With increased and faster traffic the dangers of the Beit bridges on the main road were realised, and notices were erected at the approaches to some of the most dangerous. The Mpudzi one read: AT EXCESSIVE SPEEDS CARE SHOULD BE EXERCISED WHEN' APPROACHING THIS BRIDGE. SLOW DOWN. Regular users of the road wondered if strangers would ever have time to read all of



this peculiarly-worded warning. Another: EXCESSIVE SPEEDS ARE UNWISE APPROACHING THIS BRIDGE. SLOW DOWN. appeared to be better phrased. Still later, these notices were replaced by DEADLY HAZARD signs, which had the advantage of brevity.

For some years the need for large-scale afforestation was fully discussed at Farmers' Association meetings and at the Eastern Districts Development Committee Congress, and about the same time the decision was reached that Rocklands should be part of a cattle-free zone. Small private plantations had shown that Melsetter was ideally suitable for pines, eucalypts, cypresses and poplars, and that large-scale plantations could be economic.

As so often happens, many people start working on the same idea at the same time, and in this instance the Forestal Lands and Railway Co. Ltd. of London, through its subsidiary the Natal Tanning Extract Company, made the first moves to buy land for tree-planting on a commercial scale in Melsetter. In 1944 representatives of the Natal Company spent some time inspecting the district, being driven round and accommodated by local farmers. They decided to buy land, and the Rhodesian Wattle Co. Ltd. was formed, with Head Office in Umtali.



A wattle plantation

The prices they paid increased Melsetter's land prices and are listed for interest — in each instance transfer fees were also paid, but are not included in the purchase prices. In 1945 they bought Cecilton from D. J. B. Wiese, 11 257 acres for £13 296.13.4; Erasmus, 3323 acres from D. J. Erasmus and S. G. Dredge, for £4 000; and Joppa, 2958 acres, from J. N. Papenfus for £2 795. Between 1947 and 1951 they bought Highlands, 7972 acres, from the Papenfus family for £11 916; Onrust, 2 116 acrpas from P. T. and P. J. Wiese, for £2 500; Nyabamba, 1 698 acres from G. A. Sinclair for £10 000; and Heathfield from Hanmer Brothers, 6 865 acres for £45 000. In 1957 they bought Vooruitzicht, today's Charleswood, 6 880 acres from Executors of P. S. Martin for £32 500.

The coming of the Wattle Company helped Melsetter with its main road, as the company was promised that a fully-tarred road would be ready for the heavy transport which would operate when the wattle extract was ready for export. The increased population also contributed to a wider range of interest, and many of their staff immediately took part in local activities.

The Wattle Company started intensive development of their properties and wattle trees were planted on a large scale. They offered private growers a 15-year agreement, guaranteeing a minimum buying price and a premium above this in direct ratio to selling price for wattle extract in world markets, and some private growers planted wattle with varying degrees of success, as the price did not keep up to the level of expectations.

The Forestry Department (which became the Forestry Commission in 1954) owned some farms and interest was taken in the area, but development was held up owing to the War. In 1945 they bought Rocklands, and formed the Martin Forest Reserve with Rocklands, The Corner, Dunblane, Westfield, Clifton and Riven Hills, and planted the first pines in 1946 and made early plantings of poplar. The herd of semi-tame eland, of which John Martin had been so proud, had the freedom of the Reserve, and the Department took on the care of five Martin graves and that of Mrs. du Preez on Clifton.

Stray buffaloes sometimes roamed the district, and in 1945 a lone bull was shot on Orange Grove. Two cheetahs were killed on Albany, leopards continued to be a menace particularly among sheep, and jackals were also frequently destroyed. The Allotts sold the hotel and returned to Belmont.

A well-attended Service of Thanksgiving for the end of the war was held in Melsetter on Sunday, 19th August 1945, taken by the Rev. C. Dotson and the Rev. O. S. A. Robertson.

The "top house" known today as Mrs. Theunissen's Top Shop was originally a dwelling house built by C. R. Cannell. Mr. and Mrs. Harris McLeod bought it and the adjoining corner stand for £400, and proceeded to renovate and add on in order to establish the Dunbarton Guest House. Building during the post-war period was difficult, with materials in short supply and petrol rationing restricting transport. Items such as ceiling material were unobtainable: the ceilings, which are still in reasonable condition over twenty years later, were made by conditioning stretched hessian with a cement-sand mixture and then painting it. Their builders were Jordaan, who was a general handyman: he repaired motorcars, did carpentering and ran a useful local lorry service; Philip Steyn; and Jack Mawdsley, from whom the McLeods later bought Bethany Cottage.



Harris and Olive McLeod

Slowly the Guest House was finished, with a large livingroom and bedrooms gaily fitted and with running water laid on in each. The bath on galvanised iron legs resembled a cattle water-trough, and the user was warned not to pull the round wooden peg which served as a plug as there was no outlet. The first guest had to be delayed as long as possible getting off the R.M.S. bus while Harris finished hanging the door of her bedroom. Catering was difficult owing to food rationing, but they managed by making all they could: butter from bought cream, bread, jam, and bottled fruit. Meat from Gideon Martin's small butchery was 6d a lb, and spring chickens from Mrs. Whittall were 1/ 6d each. The charge for guests was £8.10 a month including washing, and schoolchildren were put up for 2/ 6d for dinner, bed and sandwiches for the bus journey. Among the guests were Cattle Inspectors and their wives, newcomers and local residents. When Gideon Martin married Mrs. Steyn their reception was held at Dunbarton.

The Railways ran an incredibly uncomfortable passenger bus for a short while, which did a day trip from and back to Umtali on the cuttings road.

Dr. MacRae retired at the end of 1945 and the post of G.M.O. was taken over by Dr. J. P. Ziervogel, who thought it would be a temporary six-months appointment but found it stretched for some years.



Chimanimani pincushion protea

Chapter 17

In March 1946 the Chief Medical Officer assured Dr. Ziervogel that a Cottage Hospital for Melssetter was being put on the Estimates. With this encouragement the Hospital Committee started making bricks and suitable sites were considered in readiness for the Town Planning which was supposed to be immirent. Little more was done to raise funds, as it was felt that the money in hand and promised was enough to negotiate with the Government on the £ for £ principle when the scheme was implemented. Years of frustration followed, with no definite undertaking being given by the Government after the verbal assurance in 1946.



Bokmakierie

The piped water system needed improving and was inadequate, and the Circle Engineer recommended a diversion weir and furrow or pipe from the top of the hill. He thought there was ample water for the present and immediate future needs, and that the Waterfall stream held enough water to supply a town twice the size of Umtali. The Government brought Lindley North, 1 500 acres, with the intention of subdividing it into 100-acre plots for the settlement of immigrants.

The community mourned the passing of a gentle and kind friend when F. E. Cronwright died, aged 68, and appreciation of the services he had rendered was recorded.

At the School F. W. J. McCosh came as Headmaster; Mrs. J. Smith, full of energy and always knowing what bit of mischief was about to be tried, was the other teacher and there was one matron. An epidemic of measles swept the school and the small staff had a very difficult time on 24-hour a day duty looking after the sick children and also teaching the well ones. One rondavel was the only sickroom and others had to be emptied of stores and furniture with both boys and girls ill, and a case of pneumonia complicated matters still further.

After this the School got a second matron, and the School Council pressed very hard for better sickroom accommodation, and in due course a small sickbay was built on the site of two of the original rondavels.

Few local farmers sent their children to the school with its primitive conditions and State ward boarders, but Jim and Barbara Sinclair went in 1946, when Jim had Edward Rawstorne to keep him company but Barbara, not quite six and a half, was the only English-speaking girl boarder. 30 out of the 38 pupils were boarders. Gradually from then on the school filled with local pupils.

In December an Open Day was held and at the inaugural meeting of the Parent-Teachers' Association (which never functioned very actively) the names of Martin and Steyn were chosen for the School Houses. The following year the School had its first swimming gala, held at the Hotel swimming-bath, and presented a Pageant written and produced by Fred and Olga McCosh, which retold the story of the Gazaland Treks.



Jersey cow

In March 1946 a well-attended public meeting discussed the pressing need for a social centre, plans for which had been held up by the long wait for Town Planning. A plan had been drawn up for building next to the Memorial Hall, but as that precluded outside recreations taking place near the centre other possibilities were discussed. Everyone agreed on the need for a centre: there were no facilities for entertainment for the village community; those living at a distance wanted to park their children somewhere with no inconvenience to anyone else in order to take part in activities; and newcomers could more easily get to know people if there were a centre. A list of suggested rooms with full details of their purposes was read and discussed. The meeting appointed a Recreation Club Committee, which worked hard at wider plans and in the meantime made the Memorial Hall more comfortable and equipped it for some indoor games so the village community was able to make use of it, and regular 2/ 6d dances were held.

In 1947 a Play-reading Club had well-attended fortnightly meetings and produced two plays in the Memorial Hall.

G. E. McLeod did an excellent job of keeping the Library going single-handed, but with very little income and no new books it was really moribund when in 1947 he asked the W.I. to take it over. The W.I. Library sub:Committee was immediately formed and worked extremely hard at the mammoth task of sorting through all the old books, selling those for which a market could be found, burning hundreds of absolutely useless ones, and cataloguing the remainder. During the next few years the W.I. raised money locally, applied successfully for a Government £ for £ grant, started restocking the shelves, publicised the amenities and canvassed for new subscribers, and got the

Library going again very successfully with a paid Librarian. The W.1. took its responsibilities seriously in administering such a valuable property which belonged to the whole community.

In 1947 A. C. Soffe bought Tilbury and Dunstan from G. J. van Riet, who had bought the farms from English and had employed Schalk Kioppers to supervise his 1 200 head of cattle. Soffe intended to concentrate on cattle and agriculture, and sent out a small pedigree herd of Aberdeen Angus, some Herefords and Afrikanders, and a Jersey herd to provide milk for the staff. Pastures and crops of maize, potatoes, peanuts, pineapples and 1 200 citrus trees were planted, with Tilbury the first in the district to have overhead irrigation. Investigations were made into the possibility of other development: a Dutch cigar tobacco expert from Indonesia would in his enthusiasm have transformed the farms overnight; tea experts declared the property a planter's dream, and tea seedheds were established, but there were only a dozen Africans living on the 21 000 acres and locals warned there would always be a shortage of labour for a tea proposition — this was subsequently proved incorrect, with a happy and contented labour staff.



Neale and Peggie Murray

The Scenic road was the only means of access and from Rocklands the track went down the Haroni valley through Vooruitzicht, with eleven gates from there to Tilbury. Mud and swollen rivers were accepted hazards, and on one occasion the seven-ton lorry took eight days to reach Tilbury from Umtali.



Barbara and Teddy Winwood

The only buildings were a small brick under iron cottage with a permanently flushed 'lavatory' over a furrow, two large stone and dagga sheds and a dipping tank. The first task was to build staff houses with materials, including sand, carried all the way from Umtali.

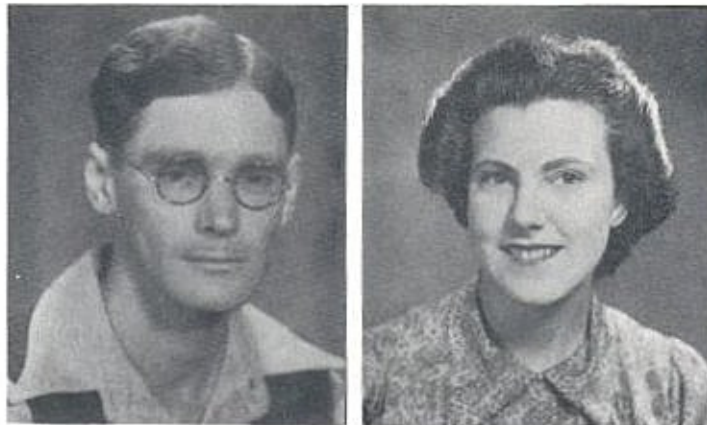
After the War there was an influx of new farmers, who all contributed to Melsetter's progress. Permanent well-built houses were erected on most farms and development carried out, but all who tried did not

survive the difficulties of farming here.

During the Second World War F. Neale transferred his farm Westward Ho! to his godson Neale Murray, then an S.A.A.F. bomber pilot. When he was demobilised Neale spent a year at Fairview learning about farming and conditions here, and when Peggie joined him in 1946 they started farming on Westward Ho!, sold it later to the B.S.A Co., and settled on Bokkraal, bought from Katie Cilliers, and concentrated on cattle, maize, orchards and tree plantation.

Springvale was bought by Teddie and Barbara Winwood, whose main farming lines are cattle, crops and avocado pears with which they did very well with air-freighting overseas before U.D.I.

On a Sunday in October a Mr. and Mrs. Green came to Albany. Coming from Bulawayo, they found it a pleasantly warm day, but were very impressed when the Murrays, Dr. and Mrs. Rose, John Maurice and the Geoff Sinclairs arrived, and each family as they got out of their cars said spontaneously: "Isn't it appallingly hot?" If this was Melsetter's hottest weather, Edward and Alicia Green felt confirmed in their feeling that this was where they would like to live. They spent the night, Pat and Edward rode over the top half of Albany the following day, arrangements were made for the Greens to buy that section, and soon afterwards Edward and Alicia moved on to Mutzarara.



Edward and Alicia Green

Before tackling the farm Edward got Lofty Oliver to survey it. Lofty, a burly 6' 4", and Edward, who was short and slight, spent a weekend at Albany and when they set off on a one-day survey trip on a very hot February day, Lofty loaded up Edward and an African with the theodolite and necessary heavy equipment, and he himself was burdened with one footrule. His recollections of the effort are not very accurate!

"Probing new frontiers brings to mind our early struggles on Mutz: how we explored those rugged fastnesses, as yet untrodden by the foot of Bata, and in particular that grand Epic of endurance, THE ASCENT OF TREE 'F'! What a triumph that was, when you and I finally made it to the topmost branches and looked out for the first time over that heaving wilderness (which you and Leish went on to transform with your inimitable energy and art into lovely Mutzarara). To the south shimmered Mount Silinda and due east was PENI. We agreed how felicitous the name was, for had it been plural it would almost certainly have attracted undesirable elements to the area, and it typified that innate sense of Dignity and Restraint so characteristic of whoever named it.

"Then you abandoned me above the Snowline and pushed off mumbling about having to telephone to Leish. I remember calling..., and calling..., and how the foolish sounds were instantly whistled into shreds by the shrieking icy blast, and I couldn't find you... How I survived, bowed under the weight of ALL the survey kit, I'll never know. The last 3000 feet of the descent I perforce accomplished by sliding in a sitting position down the frozen surface of the stream, with

acute anguish accompanying the combined odour of smouldering khaki shorts and gluteal skin as I reached a speed rate of over 136 miles per hour.

"For an introduction to a new neighbour it must have been a stiff test for Pat and Shirley: I was covered in snow and icicles and smelt like a braaivleis, and they could hardly tell which end of me to shake hands with — but they took it all without batting an eyelash. What hurt even more than my raw tail was when I was led in and found you toasting yourself in front of the fire, looking as smug as a pregnant bedbug, and you said: 'Hello, old man just dropped in? You ARE late.'"

Lofty and Chris Oliver bought a portion of Mutzarara, Marangi, and for various spells lived there and developed orchards, but Lofty's real interest was civil engineering, to which he returned. Edward's brothers, Will and Charles, and sister Katharine Daniell, took over another section of Mutzarara, Claverdon.

John and Elizabeth Blackwood Murphy came to live with Elizabeth's parents, Dr. and Mrs. Rose, while they built Carpenham on a portion of Lemon Kop, where they have developed a garden of outstanding interest and delight.



Erica Johnstoniana

Dr. and Mrs. Chiko Mueller established fruit orchards on Nyashama. Dr. Mueller's accounts of personal experiences of the Resistance Movements in Yugoslavia were of great interest. He was a great wine-maker, and tried hard, without success, to get the Government to grant licences to home producers. After he died, Phoebe-Ann carried on the peach project assisted by her sister Alice Beevers until ill-health in 197Q. forced her to leave.

John and Edna Kioppers came back to Melsetter and made their home on Guavana, a section of the Kioppers' family farm, Hillside, until ill-health forced them to leave in 1969.

Cecil and Mary Marshall started farming on Orange Grove where Cecil's brother Hugh joined them, but after a few years they gave up farming and turned to business interests in Melsetter. On Westbourne, Dickon and Brenda Jessop started with poultry, cattle and a store. Heather Stelp bought Boskatrand and Nzuzu, while in the early 1950s Deysbrook was bought and developed on mixed farming lines by Jim and Helen Syme.

In 1948 marauding lions took toll of cattle, and it was an anxious time while they were reported on different farms.

Also in 1948 the Ebenhaezer Committee formally handed over the Pioneer Memorial to the care of the Village

Management Board, and gave £10 for upkeep and repairs with promises from individual members of more from themselves or their children if it should be needed.

Louis Beck, the V.M.B. Chairman, said that the Board members felt privileged to be present on such an

occasion and that the Memorial would inspire and impress newcomers and would be a constant reminder to all of the hardships and difficulties overcome by those who started Melsetter. Andries Kok drew attention to the fact that names on the Memorial were English as well as Afrikaans, as both peoples had started the district together, and were both still living in it. The five-year anniversary continues to be marked by a solemn service in the Dutch Reformed Church and a procession to the Memorial, where speeches are made and wreaths are laid.

The Melsetter-Chipinga branch of the British Empire Service League was formed, which held annual meetings alternately in Melsetter and Chipinga.



An account appeared in the Umtali Advertiser of a Mystery Ruin in Mountains, of which the history was unknown and that it was thought that thirty or more years ago there was a Portuguese outpost on the border into Rhodesia. This underlines the need for facts to be recorded, as readers will remember that after 1928 the Portuguese Border Post was still occupied. The 1948 article described the path leading into the gap in the great mountains as having been cut by hand, and over it white men were carried in litters. "Three miles through the gap is the house ruin and on either hand tower giant sandstone rocks. Two long avenues lead up through the deserted terraces and crumbling remains of a flower garden. Fire had blackened the ruin and the great trees which experts told me were more than 50 years old."

Melsetter continued to wait impatiently for the promised Town Plan, and at last in May 1947 a surveyor started work. One result of the survey was that the Dunbarton Guest House was declared to be in a business area but was not classed as a business; the McLeods sold it soon afterwards, and when Hugh and Bobbie Pritchett bought it they renamed it The Anchor Private Hotel. Hugh put in electricity and offered to provide a power line to the Memorial Hall, but his offer was not taken up as soon afterwards he sold the Anchor. The Pritchetts moved from The Moorings, which they had bought from Jordaan who had built it and which the Marshalls bought later, and farmed at Pembroke Valley until the family later left Melsetter.

During 1947 the Memorial Hall verandah was widened on the upper side with money raised by the W.I. in order to ease the problem of serving teas there.

In May 1948 a Town Planning Officer brought a draft redistribution plan, which he said was the first of many, only the rough thing, planned for ten years ahead, and that six months would elapse between the final approval of the plan and action in the implementation. A model of the plan was seen here fleetingly and taken back for exhibition elsewhere, and when Melsetter asked if it could be returned here it was stated that the model had deteriorated- beyond repair.

Another year passed with no further news, and when the Minister for Internal Affairs came he was greeted with a memorandum from the F.A. and the V.M.B. setting out complaints.

At the end of June 1949 the T.P. Officer said that the Melsetter Town Planning Scheme would be published in a few days' time, but as finance was not available nothing could be done immediately. The V.M.B. asked whether urgently needed buildings could be erected before the Scheme actually came into operation, and the Officer said that he would enquire into the matter. He was unable to give any indication of the prices of the new stands.

In July 1949 the Scheme was published, with Melsetter planned as a Tourist Centre, said to be after the style of a Swiss village. The centre of the Town would be the Voortrekker Memorial in the market square, and the plan allowed for a hospital, six hotels, school site, sports ground, location, abbatoir, eight industrial sites, 101 residential stands, public gardens, trading sites, and an ornamental and boating lake between the town and the Chimanimani. The Police Camp, Memorial Hall and Government offices would remain, and allowance had been made for Cemetery and Churches.

After the utter neglect which Melsetter had experienced, the scheme struck everyone as grandiose. If slow and steady development had been allowed in the previous eighteen years some more natural growth might have been seen. No mention was made of who was to finance items such as six hotels, the lake and the public gardens. The industrial site had no road to it, and even if one could get there, no water was available. Objections and problems continued for years.

In 1948 Melsetter School gained a Headmaster who devoted twenty years to its interests. After frequent changes in Head and staff it was a tremendous advantage to have some continuity while the School at last developed, and Melsetter was fortunate in having Jack and Joan Simpson for those years.



Mr and Mrs Simpson



The School had 35 pupils, of whom only one was a day pupil. Many of the children were Social Welfare cases who did not go home for weekends or short holidays and were very much part of the Simpsons' family. Conditions were primitive, and Simpson's earliest preoccupation was with the problem of sanitation as the removal boys would not make the long walk to the school in bad weather. His first acquaintance with the V.M.B. Secretary was in this connection, and the morning

phone calls usually began: "Mrs. Allott, the buckets..." Lighting was by Tilley lamps. The small remote school was known slightly as a pumpkin and sadza type, but it was a happy place and the children were well fed and cared for. Annual fees were £30.

Hostel supplies and mail came twice weekly from Umtali, brought by persevering and cheerful R.M.S. drivers. When the rains were heavy the road became impassable and lorries were held up and sometimes perishables had truly perished, and a ceremonial burial of fish and meat took place. Regular annual visitors in winter were the Hostels' Supervisor and the Government Piano Tuner, who brought news of the outside world and of other schools and colleagues.

School Inspectors were few, and a difficult journey tended to make them unappreciative of local assets.

During the third term of each year work began on the Christmas concert, with the premises a hive of industry as costumes and properties took shape. Every child took part with great enthusiasm, and rehearsals took place most afternoons to the accompaniment of torrential rain drumming on the roof.

The last Saturday of term was an afternoon of magic for the children, and the whole district turned out in force to see the show and to enjoy the intimacy of shared jokes which quite unintentionally seemed to apply to members of the community. Many a young man or woman has returned and been delighted to be remembered as the Fourth Dwarf, Emperor of China, Rumpelstiltskin, or some other character, however humble, in a play of years gone by.

Sports Day was originally held in the middle term, but the rigours of Melssetter winters caused it to be changed to the end of the first term. Enthusiasm and excitement ran high in the days of preparation. Whatever the weather, the faithful supporters were always present to cheer and encourage the children. These functions were followed by a lavish tea supplied by school and parents and enjoyed by all.

Swimming was much appreciated, and on Mondays the children were conducted in a croc. to the hotel swimmingbath. Inter-schools sporting fixtures were limited to those with the nearest neighbours — keen rivalry existed, but many firm friendships began on the playing fields. Some memorable matches were played by children against parents, cricket and tennis in summer and soccer and netball in winter.

Long walks and picnics were very popular. Children loved to know that they were following an old tradition in enjoying walks to Lonely Tree, Bridal Veil Falls, Pork Pie, Greenmount and the Pioneer Graveyard, just as their parents had before them.

Church services were held at regular intervals — Anglican and other denominations in the Memorial Hall and Dutch Reformed in their own Church. Church unity was an accepted thing, and all attended whatever service was on hand. When there was no church service Sunday School was held in a classroom accompanied by lusty hymn singing, a few special favourites cropping up regularly.

On Saturday nights everyone donned party clothes and the children organised their own concerts with a fund of entertaining items. On Sunday evenings there were gatherings for gramophone records and on weekdays bedtime reading was popular.

November 5th celebrations were eagerly awaited. During supper Simpson set the pieces up and the children arrived in warm dressing gowns or blankets to watch the display. Homemade toffee



Rhodes Grass

went the rounds, and after the last and finest rocket had been duly admired, all trooped in for hot cocoa. Almost as exciting as the fireworks was the next morning's Gold Rush: at 6.45 n.m. everyone lined up, and at a blast of a whistle the Rush began to collect the debris. It was a triumph to collect a large number, and particularly the biggest rocket.

Local residents were united in doing their best for the children. Each Christmas the W.I. held a party in the Memorial Hall just before the end of term, so that the whole school could attend, and it was a very happy function; these parties for up to 80 children were discontinued in 1959, by when other organisations were running their own parties and as there were no longer indigent children at the school the need was no longer there.

Each October the ladies of the Dutch Reformed Church invited the school to a party: their traditional hospitality was shown to perfection with quantities of good food, concert items, volkspeletjies, fireworks and singing. There were also the ceremonies at the Monument on the village green, and the school had a feeling of being part of history while some of the early settlers were still here and visited the school.



Agro-Economic Party: Dr Blanc, V.Curtin, S.M.Sinclair, P.Rogers, F.C.A.Murray, C.N.Hayter, G.A.Sinclair, F.N.Murray, A.W.C.Teague, G.G.

Melsetter farmers have always done their own experimenting. Conditions here differ from most of the rest of Rhodesia, and little official interest was shown in helping to find the crops best suited to these conditions. In 1949 the first Conservation Officer was stationed here, and the Government carried out an Agro-Economic Survey at the request of the Intensive Conservation Area and Food Production Committees. The team issued a very full report, summarised in the Umtali Advertiser by the statement that the time would come when beef production would give way to smaller intensive holdings of mixed farming, mainly fruit and dairying, with afforestation of sloping land.

After considerable pressure had been exerted for some years regarding the need for a research centre, the S.R. Government decided to establish one on Lindley North, which has a large

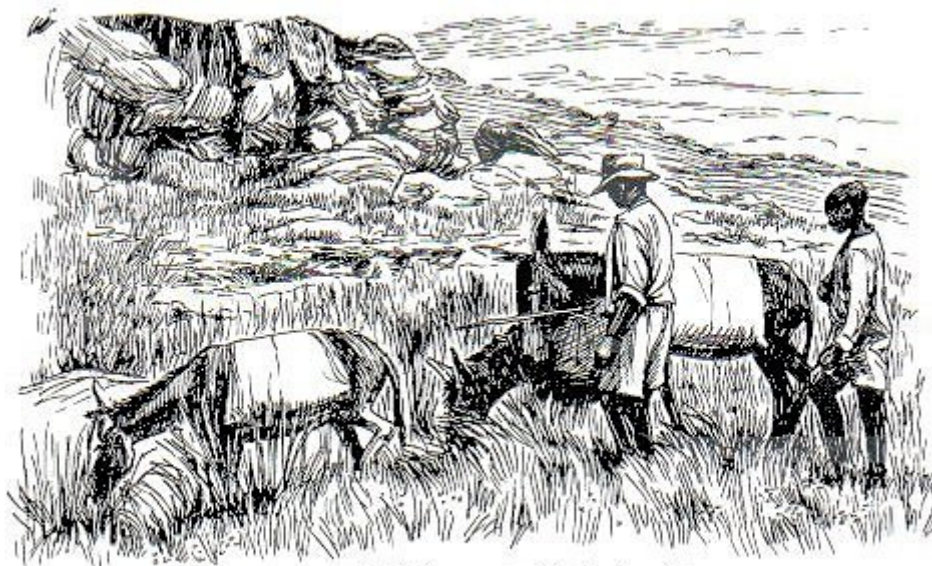
variation in altitude two main soil types and an overall easterly aspect. In 1949 the Pasture Research Sub-Station was opened on 700 acres; during the 1950s the acreage was increased to just over 1 500. Work on the Station, which throughout its life suffered from insufficient finance and shortage of staff, centred originally around improved pastures and dairy cattle and later the emphasis changed to beef cattle and veld management.

Work was also carried out on cash crops grown in rotation with pastures under test, and a flock of woolled sheep was maintained throughout with work done on internal parasites in sheep and on various systems of sheep management. New Zealand Wild White Clover was the proven backbone in the grass/clover pastures, with Chilean Red Clover its annual counterpart, and latterly Kenyan White Clover was of interest with Kenyan Red Clover its companion annual. Dahl and Napier were proved to be of value as fodder crops, and Star and Kikuyu grasses were outstanding. Burning and mowing experiments were carried out, and potatoes, wheat and maize all yielded well when used in rotation with pasture grasses such as Love Grass and Katambora Rhodes.

Milk production on a grass/ clover sward was excellent, but because of distance from markets the dairying venture was uneconomic. Beef cattle on pasture gave the most encouraging results, and work had just been started on the production of beef off the veld when the Eastern Highlands Research Station was closed in 1965. Overall the Station served an excellent purpose, confirming many theories and disproving others. Its opening was fully justified, and its closure was a disappointment to local farmers.

In 1949 several head of cattle died of arsenical poisoning due to the leakage of dip drums near the Melssetter Trading Company and the area was immediately dug over and fenced off, but it was strongly felt that the increased traffic was too much to be handled in one room in Meikle's building by the Trading Company as Railways' Agent. Town Planning still held everything up, but about 1950 the Railway Depot was at last built and Willie Tambwere was placed in charge.

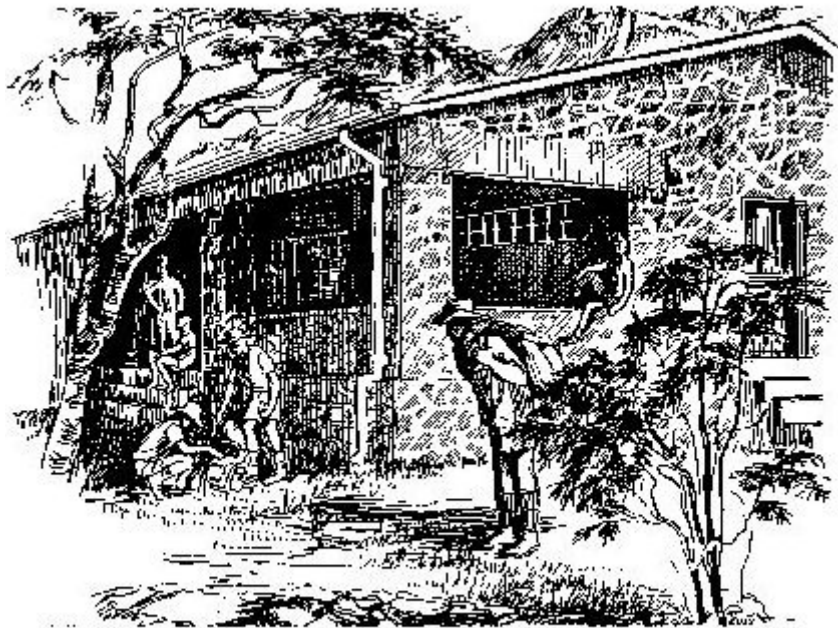
Dr. Ziervogel retired and was then able to devote his time to farming, and Dr. Bryce Niblock took over the G.M.O.'s practice.



Building materials for the hut

The National Parks Bill was presented in Parliament, and the 20,213 acre Chimanimani and the Wankie National Parks were the first two proclaimed. Access to the Chimanimani National Park is by road from Melsetter for 15 miles to the parking place at Dead Cow Camp. A steep path leads up the mountainside, across a plateau, and down to the Hut. The time for this walk varies from one to 2½ hours according to different members of one family; after the long uphill pull it is disconcerting to find that the hut is only 500' higher than Melsetter village.

The hut was built with enterprise and hard work: all materials, including items such as windowpanes, were carried up by relays of carriers and donkeys. In the impressive stone building everything is on a large and roomy scale, and the kitchen facilities include gas stoves and paraffin refrigerators; cold showers and waterborne sanitation have been installed, and overnight accommodation is 7/ 6d a head which includes the hire of sleeping bags. From the hut there are magnificent views down to a plateau with a trout-stocked river winding through it and across to the backdrop of high peaks. It is an excellent centre for extensive excursions, and the hut is supplied with maps of the region.



The Chimanimani Hut

Dr. Rose's services were recognised when he was made an M.B.E., but rejoicing on his behalf was tempered with sadness when Mrs. Rose died.

Sir Arthur Sims, a prominent New Zealand financier, toured Rhodesia looking for land, a project in which his daughter Margaret and son-in-law Lewis Black were particularly interested. In Umtali Binks Holland told him of Llewellyn's Ranches, which included Gwendingwe, Brackenbury, Brooklyn and Zebra. L. C. Meredith had owned these and run cattle on them for many years; he built the house about 1927, and after his death in 1942 his son Cyril had managed the estate.

Lewis came out, met Cyril, saw the land, the sheep, the cattle, the weather conditions, prospects for pine forests, and liked what he saw. Arrangements were completed for the purchase of Llewellyn's Ranches, which had about ten miles of track but no roads, and about 650 sheep and 1 250 head of cattle, and Philip Hayter took over as Manager of Gwendingwe Estate in June 1949. Soon afterwards Ashbourne was bought from Hanmer Brothers.

Meredith's bossboy, Matussa, was not kept on by the Company, and he told Cyril that he had let down his forefathers by selling the property and that he, Matussa, would see to it that the people who took over never succeeded, and regularly sent messages saying that the curse would be fulfilled. When Phil was first there it was lonely, and when he heard movement at night he was certain that it was old man Meredith cording back to see what was happening, perhaps the curse being fulfilled. As Phil shifted over in bed there was a shrill peal of sound from the domestic bell in the kitchen, and he thought that was indeed Meredith ringing for Matussa — and then discovered that he had pushed the bare flex against the metal bedhead and caused the ringing himself.

Chapter 18

The route for the new main road was chosen and surveyed and work started on the construction. Sir Alfred McAlpine & Sons had the contract for the section from Skyline to the Biriwiri river, and the Roads Department did the rest themselves.

At the end of 1949 Bill Atkins, today the Rural Council's Road Supervisor, came out from England to work for the Roads Department. The chap in charge of C.M.E.D. in Umtali said he was to go to Nyahode and pointed to one lonely flag on a large map, which meant nothing to Bill, but he ascertained that the nearest pub was nine miles away and signed a document undertaking to stay at least six months until his wife joined him. He did not know till he got to Nyahode that they were taking blokes on for two weeks at a time as nobody would stay there.

The chap he was to relieve told him that at Nyahode Camp there was nothing to do, and on his advice Bill laid in stocks of everything he might need: reading matter, cigarettes, booze, and plenty of groceries. At the transport camp a left-hand drive ten-ton truck was pointed out to him as his transport, and Bill was disconcerted to learn that he had to drive it himself as he had never driven one in his life, but he picked up ten tons of cement as instructed and set off. He was given a boy to show him the way, which he felt was very good of them.

He managed all right and thought there was nothing in it as he travelled on the narrow tar to the Junction and on the dirt road to Cashel. Then it started raining and coming down Weltevrede he put the brakes on and nearly went over the side, and then understood why he had seen people in Umtali using chains: until then he had only seen them used for snow. At Melseetter mine host Charlie Heard advised him to spend the night as it was raining very heavily.

Next morning he pushed on to Nyahode and for the next three weeks it rained steadily and nobody did any work. In the camp they played poker every day, and when they ran out of food and drink they sent the Galion grader off to Melseetter with a large order, but it stuck. They then sent off 40 boys who got through and returned heavily laden. Bill recalls that those wooden crates held 72 bottles and took some lifting.

When the rain stopped at last they finished the section, and moved camp to the top of Skyline where the Engineer had chosen a site with a beautiful view and lovely sunsets. They loaded the



mobile workshop on to a truck and hitched the caravans on the back, and pitched camp on top of the end of the world in the chosen exposed position.

One night there was a terrific gale and thunderstorm. A mechanic had awnings on his caravan and his 4'10 wife hung on to them trying to save them in the gale, and she was swung round by the wind. The portable p.k s were blown half a mile away and the cement store roof went over the top of the wattles and landed intact with all the weights on it. It rained in buckets and the following morning the place was under water and nobody could do any work. When Betty arrived soon afterwards with their small son she was very impressed with the view, and thought it was a glorious place.

The Roads Department camp was then moved beyond the Biriwiri river and work carried on away from McAlpine's section. Getting to Melsetter was a terrible trip with some shocking deviations on the Macs' section of 1 in 3, at the worst of which a Land Rover was kept on one side with a wire cable on the other.



Old and new roads

A roster was drawn up for everybody to take his turn in the unpopular task of driving the weekly passion wagon to Melsetter, when the wives went to do their shopping. One very wet night they were late getting back so Bill and the Roads Foreman went to look for them. They saw no sign of them as they drove past the Macs' camp and from the phone-box — a piece of sheet metal only — at Skyline they phoned the hotel and were told that the bus had left hours before. Really alarmed they drove on down, checking in all the culverts along the uncompleted road. Eventually they reached Melsetter and then drove slowly back up to Skyline and down to the Macs' camp where they called in — and there were all the wives comfortably having a drink! In camp there was nothing to do in the evenings, so they used to answer Government Gazette advertisements for all kinds of jobs.

There were accidents and incidents on the road, and several trucks were written off. One employee was inspecting pegs and forgot to put on the handbrake of his Land Rover, and when he looked round he saw it about 20 yards away careering down the road. Onlookers were amused to see the short, tubby chap running after it to try to catch it, but it disappeared over the side and went straight over Skyline, and that was the end of that vehicle.

Chains were an unpleasant necessity. Putting them on was a job which was always left till the very last minute when, after much skidding in the mud, no further progress could be made without them. Putting them on then entailed uncomfortable paddling-round with legs and arms smothered in sticky red mud before they were finally adjusted. When Land Rovers came on to the market in 1949 they were very popular in Melsetter, chains were no longer needed, and travelling became a more certain undertaking.



In 1950 Melsetter's feeling of being badly neglected by the Government resulted in a visit to Salisbury to interview Ministers on the many matters urgently needing attention by a deputation of representatives of the Farmers' Association, the Road Council, the Village Management Board, the Women's Institute, the School Council, and the Eastern Districts Regional Development and Publicity Association, led by the M.P. for Eastern.

The deputation discussed the burning question of Town Planning with the Minister of Internal Affairs; current problems concerning maize control, forestry and horticulture with the Minister of Agriculture; roads and the School with the Minister of Roads and Education. These Ministries were sympathetic and interested in the problems discussed, and the deputation felt that the visit would have some helpful effect, but in the event only one concrete immediate improvement resulted: the School kitchen was put on the next year's Estimates, and the Minister visited the School and went very fully into other problems.

On the question of clinic and health facilities the replies of the Ministry of Native Affairs and Public Health astounded the deputation, which was clearly given to understand that no provision for improved facilities was to be made. Chipinga Hospital had been opened in 1949, and Melsetter had to accept the fact that the Government would not erect a hospital here, and after more public meetings to discuss the possibility of undertaking anything without Government assistance it was reluctantly agreed that the whole idea must be abandoned.

Dissatisfaction with the Town Planning set-up caused concern as although it was originally stated that stand transfers would be ready about April 1950, the authorities had allowed no transfers by the end of 1951. In 1952 three public meetings discussed some aspects including the water supply problem, lack of funds for development, and the fact that the Government had reserved some of the best residential stands and left too few for public purchase.

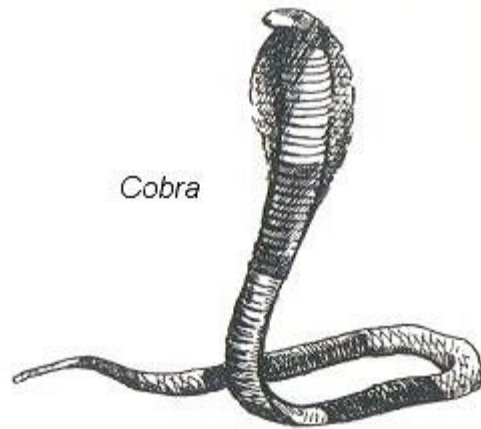
The V.M.B. still had no jurisdiction to sell stands of which the owners could not be traced, but were assured that they would be released after two years in terms of the Town Planning Act: in 1958 they were still not allowed to take back these plots and it was uncertain whether the Road Council could take any action in this connection on the lines of non-payment of road rates.

In 1954 the Melsetter Landowners' and Farmers' Association drew up a Memorandum, carefully detailed and supported by facts, which was to be discussed at a Public meeting with the Minister of Internal Affairs and the M.P. for Eastern on a date convenient to these gentlemen. It was apparently not convenient for some time, and it was only in April 1956 that they came and met the V.M.B. and a representative of the F.A., and no public meeting took place and there is no record that any attention was paid to the memorandum.

The V.M.B. seldom got replies to their queries. When the Town Planning Officer came in 1958 he expressed surprise that the Board had not been informed about leasing commonage land for wattle planting and gave them all the replies for which they had been waiting. When he was asked when the final survey of the 2-acre plots on the Orange Grove road and the four Smallholdings opposite the Country Club could be expected, he expressed surprise that these stands had not yet been put on the market, and presented a plan of the plots. He said that as and when the smallholdings had been taken up, and if there was a further demand, his Department

would investigate the possibilities of more residential commonage plots. Peter Remmer later bought and developed two of the smallholdings.

For the water supply the V.M.B. decided in 1950 to implement the Circle Engineer's scheme at an estimated cost of £1 715. They applied for a Government loan of £3 750: £1 715 for the water scheme, £300-£400 for latrines (aqua-privies at £9.17 each f.o.r. Salisbury), and approximately £1 000 for ten brick huts in the location, leaving a little over for unforeseen expenses. The first unforeseen expense swallowed up the reserve the very next month, as the Engineer had omitted to include operation costs and the cost of water. His final report was of a full scheme to cost £27 000. By the time the first stage was completed in 1952 material, bricks and piping had all cost more than estimated and all houses were not connected to the new supply. Water rates were increased to £1.5.0. a month but it was soon found that, although these rates would have helped the V.M.B., residents were unwilling to pay them, and they had to be reduced to 12/6. In spite of financial difficulties the scheme was continued.



At the end of 1954 the V.M.B. hoped to be able to terminate the sanitary service, but as some Government Departments and three private residents had not installed waterborne sanitation the V.M.B. decided to charge £5 a month for the service. This bright idea was turned down by Local Government and the charge was fixed at £1.10. By May 1958 all sanitation in the village was waterborne.

During the 1950s the V.M.B. continued to deal with village problems. A list of names for the new streets was compiled by official bodies, but the upkeep of the roads themselves continued to be difficult. The V.M.B. bought 150 feet of braided hose but found that the dust problem was not solved by watering, which was expensive and unsatisfactory as the roads dried up immediately again and no permanent good resulted. In 1954 the Road Council and the V.M.B. discussed the tarring of the village streets which, it was understood, had been started by the Roads Department. Unfortunately this was incorrect and no tarring ever did take place: tar was delivered to the village, but the drums were taken away again, and no hope was held out of the Government undertaking the tarring.

The Camping Site, on which a cottage was built, was let at £3 a month, and later when the V.M.B. had spent over £300 on improving the cottage it was rented at £6.10 a month plus water and service charges. The Board discussed the possibility of a new camping site and a motel site, but were unable to move in the matter.

For the Cemetery in 1950 a small committee with enthusiasm and energy started clearing, cutting down dead trees, burning, making paths, and tidying the many graves without tombstones which were of all shapes and sizes and not in line; they wrote to relatives asking if permanent headstones were planned and asked for permission to take over the care of the graves and for a donation towards expenses, but received no replies. In 1957 the F.A. gave £10 towards upkeep and another small committee was appointed, but in 1959 the money was still in the V.M.B. books. Charges were increased in 1960 from £2.10 to £5 for adults and from £1.10 to £3 for children.

The dipping tank site was sold and arrangements were made for commonage cattle to be dipped at Lindley.

In 1950 there were some cases of tick fever. As the Government did not provide for a stock of the necessary Aureomycin and allied drugs and as it was not easy to get medicines from Umtali quickly, the W.I. organised a special fund and, after full consultation with the G.M.O., bought a

supply of the recommended drug which was placed in the care of the District Nurse. This supply was of value in cases when the G.M.O. recommended its immediate use, and users replenished the depleted stocks.

Gradually developments took place in the village. Charlie Heard bought the Anchor, and the top house was rented by the Government from 1951 as a European Clinic and home for the District Nurse until D.N.s' posts were later abolished. In 1956 Dr. Rosemary Fox ran a private African clinic, and the opening of the Biriwiri African Clinic eased the position slightly.

Fairbairn Cronwright took over his father's store and moved it to Meikle's Building, after which it was rented by successive storekeepers as the Melsetter Trading Company until Meikles took it over themselves, and it is now run as Meikles Melsetter.

The Garage and Service Station was housed in a primitive building and much of the service was amateur. From 1947 successive owners made efforts to keep a garage going in temporary premises, until Dr. Ziervogel financed the present Garage building, in which Giellie Bredenkamp and Bill Atkins ran B & A Motors for some years. The building was then bought by the Vacuum Oil Company and rented to successive operators, with Mr. and Mrs. H. Evans in charge today.

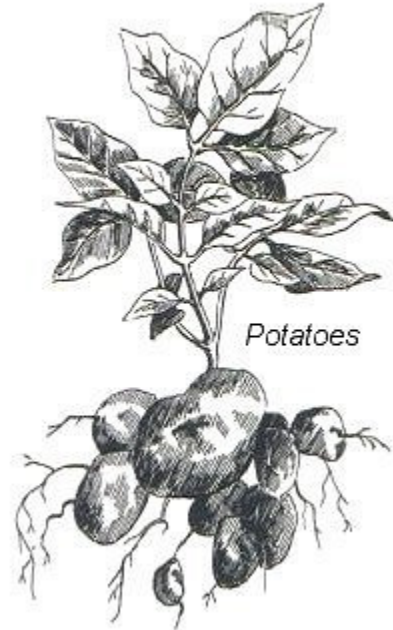
From 1947 Bottle Stores were run successively in Meikles' Building and in The Anchor. In 1952 Mr. and Mrs. Nesse came to Rhodesia, heard that the Melsetter Bottle Store was for sale, and took over the business in Jack Knott's new building. Since Norman's death in 1957, Maynie has carried on the business.



Giellie Bredenkamp

The butchery position was not satisfactory with no proper building and no abattoir, and permanent arrangements could not be made owing to the hold-up in Town Planning, but various people made attempts to keep one going. In 1950 van der Linde was granted a temporary licence, and in 1952 he built the abattoir for the V.M.B. In 1953 the butchery building, financed by Bill Springer, was completed, and a full licence was issued for the New Cash Butchery, which Giellie Bredenkamp bought soon afterwards. Giellie and Nellie lived on Orals Krantz until his father died, when they moved to Dairy Plot.

Efforts were made to establish bakeries and tearooms, but none lasted very long until in 1952 it looked as if there would be a permanent one when Mr. and Mrs. Clarke built a bakery and tearoom which was in operation by March. On 19th July disaster struck. The V.M.B. had accepted Hendrik Qlwage's tender to fell some old gum trees which threatened to be a menace, and unfortunately when an enormous gum outside the Bakery was being felled the tackle broke and the tree crashed through the roof of the building. According to Rowan Cashel's report every precaution had been taken and no blame could be attached to anyone concerned, but the responsibility lay with the V.M.B.



Cashel, the N.C., left immediately for Salisbury to interview the Government's Legal Department, and the Government Valuator came to assess the damage. There is no traceable record of the outcome, and shortly afterwards the Clarkes left Melsetter.

The W.I. staged the first Flower Shows in the Courtroom, in incredibly uncomfortable conditions and with no previous experience of such undertakings. The Shows were so popular and aroused so much horticultural interest that the Melsetter Horticultural Society was formed in 1950, which was well supported and was soon holding two Shows a year in the Country Club. Every Show has meant a tremendous lot of hard work for the few members of successive committees who have undertaken the staging, but their efforts have been much appreciated and have been rewarded with some outstanding displays. Bad weather and other impediments have been experienced and have sometimes combined to reduce the number of entries, but once the members had learned something about display the exhibits of flowers, vegetables and fruit have been of a very high standard. The Society has organised enjoyable garden afternoons at members' homes, with gardening topics and floral arrangements being discussed: a feature of these afternoons is the quantity of plastic bags carried at first unobtrusively but later blatantly, as members delightedly collect their loot of cuttings and plants from their generous hosts.

The title Melsetter Country Club was adopted at a public meeting convened by the Recreation Club in April 1947. By 1950 considerable progress had been made, and in August the Club was inaugurated and a constitution approved by a public meeting. A lot of hard work went into fund-raising over the years, including donations of cattle which were sold for funds. The land was allotted and during 1951 members brought tractors and labourers and started work on the grounds.

The plan for the Club House was drawn up, bricks were made, and the building was started. It was first used for a Committee meeting in December 1952, was finished and furnished through members' efforts and was officially opened in September 1953. The bridge room was added on with donations from keen individual members soon afterwards. Out of doors the Tennis Section was the first to get going and built two courts and a shelter in 1950. A golf architect laid out a course and construction started, but little progress was made for some years. The Gymkhana Club continued as a section of the Country Club, and gradually more permanent buildings were erected: the horses are comfortably stabled, seating is provided, and Club members run the bar and cater for teas and lunches for crowds of up to 300 at the annual Meetings in comparatively comfortable conditions. In 1952 the Bowling Green was pegged out, work was started in 1955, and the laying and planting was completed by January 1957. The Cricket Section was lively and a pitch was laid out near the Gymkhana ground, where many matches were played, and for one year at least there was an active Hockey Section.



While the new road was being built there was more trouble on the cuttings road. In January 1952 the R.M.S. passenger bus turned back at Cashel as the road was reported to be eight feet deep in mud. In February the road was declared unsafe, the R.M.S. services were cut, and the Railways could give no guarantee of continuity of services. Trucks travelled in convoy until normal services were resumed in the middle of March. There were hold-ups in other years too, as the road deteriorated rapidly while the Roads Department concentrated on the new road.

Earth tremors have been experienced from time to time, with the longest spell being from March 1951 when severe tremors started and lasted off and on till August: 24 were felt during May all over the district and damaged some houses and buildings. When the Government office started rocking and cracks appeared in the wall everyone shot outside. Elric Dawson, the N.C., received a report that the mountain had fallen down, and Dennis Hobbs, Ian Farquhar and he went out to have a look, and after a long arduous walk, with several ranges being crossed, the investigating party arrived deep in the mountains.

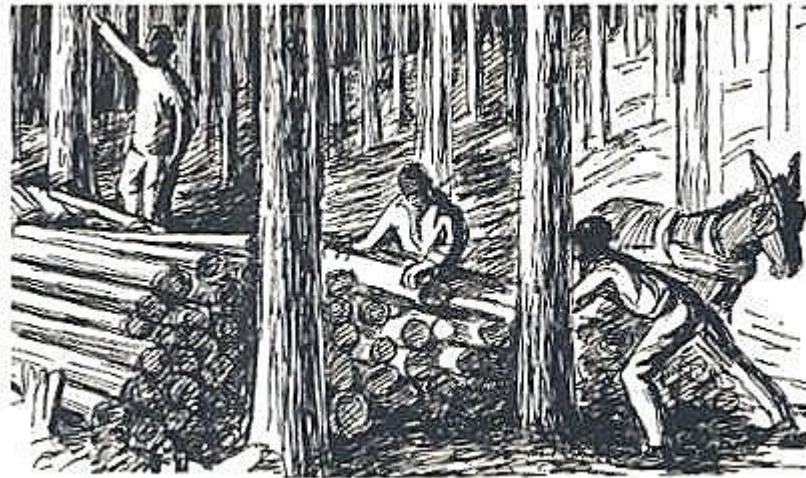
A large area, about 500 yards across, had broken away and crashed to the bottom of the gorge, destroying everything in its path; massive rocks had split and fallen many hundreds of feet. At the base of the fall was an area of burnt ground, where it was thought fire had been started by the friction of falling masses or by sparks caused when large rocks were split by others.

Chips Crook dashed into her house to telephone the Editor of the Umtali Post. While she was doing this one wall cracked from ceiling to floor. She told him this, and he said: "REALLY, Mrs. Crook!" She had a trembling dog in one hand and the phone in the other, and yelled at him: "Well, if you don't believe me, come and see for yourself."

The British South Africa Company decided to expand their forestry enterprise and their Forestry Officer, accompanied by Binks Holland, visited Melsester in February 1952. They slithered in a wheel-chained truck to the homestead huts on Welgelegen, where a clearing in the bush gave a magnificent view of the Chimanimani Mountains, and the property was bought and the Company began their afforestation programme.

Soon afterwards the Forestry Officer on horseback was shown across Settler and Cambridge by Hans Heyns, and by the end of the year 17000 acres had been bought, and the Remmers' Fairfield estate became a natural headquarters being favourably served by abundant water and

the new highway. It was decided that production of large structural sawn timber would be the first objective, needing a growing cycle of 30-40 years.



The edge of cleared forest

At Gwendingwe Estate seven acres of pine were planted on Zebra in 1950, and this original plantation is being preserved. In 1951 the first major planting was made, and among its trees is the only plus, or potentially plus, tree which the Forestry Commission has found on Gwendingwe: a plus tree has to conform to certain rigid specifications and is a possible suitable parent for hybridisation.

In 1954 the Estate lost 200 acres in a serious fire, as at that stage they did not have sufficient staff or machinery to cope. During the early 1950s the Forestry Department, which became the Forestry Commission in 1954, bought more land and started plantations on Lionhills, Chisengu, Tarka and Glencoe Forest Reserves.

On the Wattle Company Estates expansion took place. Besides the wattle-planting that went on, a school for the children of African staff was established, a model housing estate was built on Silverstream, and good houses were erected for the Estate Managers on the surrounding estates.

Wattle is grown on a ten-year cycle, and as the trees mature they are felled and stripped of the bark, which is transported in lorries to the factory for processing. While the initial development of the plantations was reaching completion the Silverstream Factory was built approximately 22 miles from both Melssetter and Chipinga. The opening of the Factory on 2nd November 1956 was a very big social occasion, when the WI. catered for the Company's 340 guests. Wattle extract is used in leather-tanning, and is obtained from the bark through a diffusion process followed by the evaporation of moisture, and the end product is a hard resinous compound.

Silverstream Sports Club was established under the auspices of the Company and has a small attractive clubhouse with tennis courts and bowling green. The gymkhana ground and cricket field are very attractively sited, bordered by huge old cypresses, and very many happy occasions have been experienced in this lovely setting.

At Tilbury forestry experts' opinion won, and with much regret the beef herd gave way to timber. In 1950 Border Forests (Rhodesia) Ltd. was formed, and tree planting began in earnest. The Company's name was changed to Border Timbers Ltd. in 1957.

The programme was to plant pines and eucalypts over the whole 21 000 acres, with main roads, extraction roads and fireguards always one step ahead of the actual tree planting. Under the

guidance of a Forest Officer each of the five blocks had its own Forester in charge of his African labour and seedbeds, while in the centre there sprang up the African school, clinic, store, bakery, workshop, dairy, dam stocked with fish, golf course, tennis court and a community hall. Soon Tilbury's soccer, tennis and cricket teams were competing with the district clubs. The network of roads spread to the tops of the mountains, and the target was completed in five years and brought visitors from all over the country and from overseas to see the growth of this wonder child.

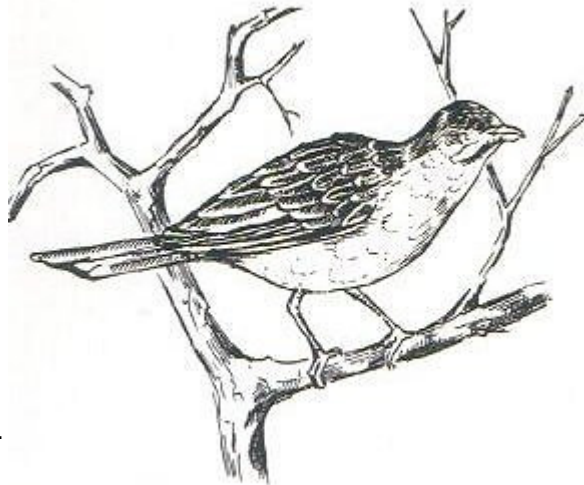
Planting the large acreages was made possible by the methods used in the design of the seedbeds, the planting of the seeds, the root pruning of the young seedlings, and the moving of 40 plants at a time and placing them in boxes ready for planting. The gadgets for root-pruning and for lifting the plants performed a most efficient and important service, and Tilbury's planting system was studied and adopted by other Foresters. The road was realigned to link up with Melsester's tarred main road and was built by Border Timbers, the Rhodesian Wattle Co., and the B.S.A. Co.

Among the trees on Tilbury are some interesting ones planted, presumably by English, more than 40 years ago. They are specimens of *Maclura aurantiaca* (synonym *pomifera*), family Moraceae, commonly known in the southern United States as American Bow Tree or Osage Orange.

Chapter 19

At the School as time marched on conditions changed. With increased numbers an extra teacher was appointed. Gradually the grounds were developed: a tennis court was chiselled out of the hillside; the original playing field was extended and another made; and a fine swimming-bath, one of the School's biggest achievements, brought the satisfaction of having every child able to swim and the enjoyment of galas.

New amenities were put into use: classrooms, dormitory, ablution blocks, sickbay and staff quarters were added and most of the old buildings were modernised. With the opening of the new road there was much coming and going of visitors, official and otherwise, and a steady stream of young teachers provided first class wives for the bachelors of the district.



East African Least Honey Guide

Conservation Days were marked by the planting of shrubs and trees to beautify the school grounds and the village. The first was the Nyasaland Mahogany which now provides shade for spectators at the tennis court; other early plantings, and perhaps the most loved, were the *Patula* pines between the compound and the tennis court which have provided a refuge for young cowboys and crooks and for small girls to set up house.

The older pupils became members of a Young Farmers' Club and travelled round the district visiting farms and estates to be shown the development of natural resources. The kindness and interest shown by their hosts was outstanding, and the far from tuneful strains of "Show me the



way to go home" invariably heralded the return to base of truckloads of tired, dirty, but extremely happy Young Farmers.

At the Memorial Hall a second plaque next to the one commemorating the First World War was unveiled in April 1952. During the address a flight of Spitfires flew past in salute. Buglers of Umtali High School Cadet Corps sounded the Last Post and the Reveille. Prayers were offered and wreaths were laid, and after the singing of the National Anthem, tea was served.

1939— 1945

IN HONOURED MEMORY OF

F. E. EDWARDS J. P. KRUGER C. J. NEZAR G. P. REID

W. J. ROSE T. F. ROBERTS L. J. VAN DER LINDE

N. P. VAN DER MERWE J. P. WATSON G. B. ZIERVOGEL

MEN OF MELSETTER AND CHIPINGA DISTRICTS

WHO NOBLY RESPONDED TO THE CALL TO ARMS

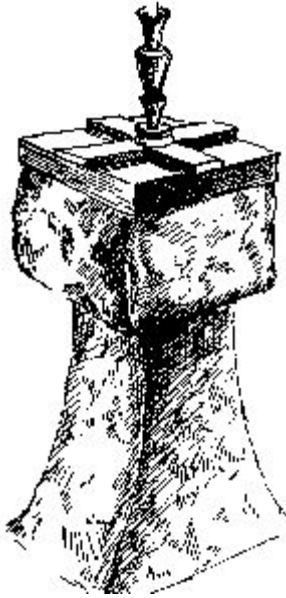
AND WHO FELL IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS.

In 1953 a public meeting authorised the transfer of £682.13. 11 from the Melsetter Memorial Hospital Fund to the War Memorial Hall. The Constitution for the Memorial Hall was ratified, and a Board of Trustees was composed of the Chairmen of the V.M.B., the F.A. and the W.I.; later the Chairman of the Library Committee was included. Mrs. Allott, who as V.M.B. Secretary had previously handled the Memorial Hall affairs, was appointed Honorary Secretary to the Board, a post which she held most efficiently until the end of 1969. The system worked reasonably well as Trustees were able to report back to their own representative organisations, but there were difficulties and a lack of continuity as the Chairmen were elected annually by their Associations.

Some of the capital was spent on major renovations — the stone wall was built; the mud floor of the verandah was cemented and painting and pointing was done; the wall between the library and kitchen was removed, which doubled the size of the Library; library shelves were bought; a new kitchen was built on the corner of the back verandah; mains water was laid on; a lavatory was built on; and the foundations were repaired.

By 1954 rates and insurance amounted to £20 a year, and had risen to £30 by 1960. The Trustees tried hard to avoid frittering away the remaining capital in annual payments, but had little source of revenue. The most regular was from the Farmers' Association, which in 1954 agreed to pay £12 a year for their monthly meetings, but reduced it to £6 in 1964. The Library aimed to pay £24 a year rental, but this was reduced to £3 in 1964. Small fluctuating amounts were received from hiring the hall to committees and societies and for social and political occasions, and from occasional hire of the piano. Religious bodies were sometimes allowed the hall free, and were sometimes charged 5/- or 10/-, but this brought in very little from the few services held.



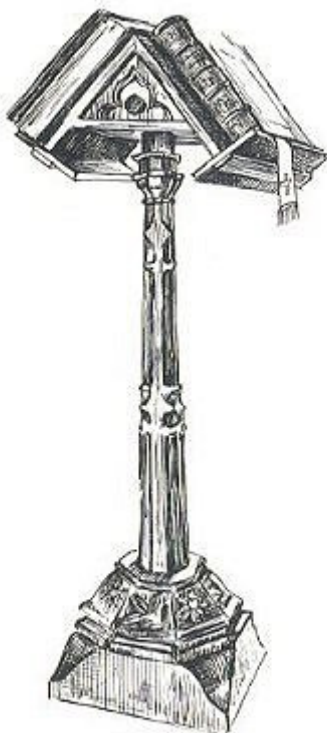
Mr. and Mrs. Townsend-Green bought the hotel and started in with plans for a luxury hotel. The first sod was turned in 1951 and the foundation stone brought from the Chimanimani Pass, was laid by T.I.F. (later Sir Ian) Wilson, M.P. On 21st March 1953 the Chimanimani Arms was opened with a lunch party and a dinner and dance.

The opening ceremonies did not go off as smoothly as had been hoped largely because the new main road was still being constructed and the last few miles into Melsetter were appallingly sticky and muddy after overnight rain. Country Club members came in for a meeting that morning and most farmers owned Land Rovers, so local residents arrived at the hotel before the roads were churned up. Parties from Umtali, however, ran into trouble, including B. D. Goldberg, then Chairman of the Board of Directors: near Melsetter the red earth road became a quagmire, a car in front stuck, his party got out to help and were soon covered in mud from head to foot, and then their car also stuck. Eventually they arrived for the opening (after everyone had finished lunch) sitting on a bulldozer and covered in mud. The party in the evening, however, was a great success and the Hotel got off to a good start.

The fact that the road was not properly passable when the hotel was completed was a severe setback. Few visitors reached the hotel, and after six months it closed down and remained closed for 18 months. Having no hotel at all was a handicap to the whole district. The Townsend-Greens relinquished their interest, and when the hotel re-opened it was called the Chimanimani Chalet, later changed to the Chimanimani Hotel.

Captain and Mrs. Allott were responsible for holding Anglicans together, and after services in the Memorial Hall there was talk of building a church, but most considered this a castle in the air with little chance of accomplishment. John Olivey returned from his War service full of enthusiasm for building a church, and he was foremost in getting the building and finishing done as the dream became a fact.

In 1953 it was decided to start collecting funds to build on the stand given by the Government, and many members of different denominations contributed. The plans were designed and drawn by Ted Allott and Jumbo Williams after the old church at Myloze in Cornwall with which it is affiliated and were finalised by architects, and work started in August.



*The Lectern,
St George's in the Mountains*

In April 1954 the Foundation Stone of St. George in the Mountains was laid by Bishop Paget, who, as Archbishop, consecrated the Church in October 1956 when the actual building was completed, although much still needed to be done inside.

Gradually the finishing and furnishing was done with voluntary help and gifts from many people. The stained glass window, given by Hallam and Beryl Elton, was found in the Eltons' home in Somerset, where it had lain for half a century. Its origin has not been proved, but it is possible that it came originally from St. Albans, Wood Street, London, which was known as the French Church; two details in the window suggest a French origin: the nun's coif worn by the Blessed Virgin and the fleur-de-lys design on the linings of St. John's cloak in the Ascension scene.

Services were conducted by priests from Umtali and by John Olivey as Lay Reader until the Rev. Gordon Kirk was in charge of Chipinga and Melsetter parishes. He was followed by the Rev. Louis Beck, who had been N.C. in Melsetter previously, until ill-health forced him to give up the charge

shortly before he died in 1970. Visiting priests now take some services, and some are taken by Robin Plunket as Lay Reader.

In 1953 the Bethlehemite Fathers of Gwelo bought Willow Grove from Harris McLeod and started a Mission, using the old farmhouse as the Mission Station. In 1957 it was taken over by the Carmelite Fathers of the Diocese of Umtali who continued the missionary work. In 1961 St. Charles Lwanga Seminary was built, and since then the Church has been built and the Seminary buildings expanded. It is a Minor Diocesan Seminary and aims to educate and provide for African boys who wish to become priests. The students, who vary in number from 50 to 60, remain at St. Charles for four years, and when they have sat G.C.E. "O" Level they are promoted to the Major Seminary at Chishawasha. All the students do not persevere, and an average of 20% go through to the Major Seminary.

In 1953 Paddy Crook, Conex Officer, suggested the establishment of an Arboretum in Melsetter, where it would be difficult to equal the setting and where conditions favoured the growth of trees. After full discussion the Horticultural Society decided to go ahead with the scheme, and the lease of 31 acres was accepted from the Government. By 1957 £964 had been collected or promised and some future annual donations were promised. Fund-raising efforts continued and the rough plan was laid out.



John Olivey



The Arboretum

Attention was once drawn to a travelling difficulty when the question was asked: "Why does the W. I. top table always have dirty feet?" With horror the chairman looked at her own feet and those of the Secretary and Treasurer: those sandal-clad feet were all dirty. It was a dusty, hot time of year, these members lived about 20 miles out, had farmer-husbands who did the driving, and had to open all those dreary gates themselves. Nobody has devised a scheme for not getting hands and feet dusty or, as the case may be, muddy, when struggling with a concertina gate. And when one arrived in the village there was nowhere to wash except at the hotel, and if one took time to wash one's feet there, the chances were that one was abandoned by an impatient husband, and had to walk through yet more dust in the streets to the meeting-place.

Other difficulties were described in 1953: "For many of us, attending meetings is never a simple matter, but last wet season I undertook my most complicated trip yet. I was looking after six children, ranging in age from one to six, only one of whom was mine. If the meeting had been an ordinary one I might have decided to stay quietly at home, but the two previous meetings had been cancelled because of the weather and the state of the roads, and I had not been off the farm for a month and was determined to have an outing.

"I brooded over our short-wheel base Land Rover to see if it would be possible to transport my temporary family the 25 miles to Melsetter, and then diffidently told my husband that if he could move the spare wheel from inside and put it on the bonnet I thought we could all fit in. His reply was not wildly encouraging but late on Friday evening the wheel was moved. When I also asked meekly if the door on my side could be put in place, I was informed that I was quite mad to attempt the trip and that he was going to have a dreadful journey. I checked the children's clothes for the next day. Margaret and Jill would have put on their party dresses if I had not firmly put them put of sight; David and Gavin could not have cared less if they had gone in yesterday's dirty shirts and shorts. I packed a suitcase with a mackintosh and a jersey for everyone, and prepared food, drink and all utensils for lunches and teas.

"Early on Saturday into the Land Rover went first my attache case with W.I. papers, then the suitcase of mackintoshes, with Elizabeth's pram on top of them filled with all the picnic basket and her own suitcase of necessities. As the pram took up nearly all the floorspace, it was lucky that the feet still to be fitted in were small. Cushions for those incredibly uncomfortable back seats were put in. We packed Jill and Noelle on one side, and David, Margaret and the nurse girl on the other. Pat drove, Gavin was between us, and Elizabeth on my lap. I found my arm had lost its cunning in holding the weight of a baby on a long trip, and in a Land Rover (even with the door fixed on a few moments before our departure) there is nowhere to rest an arm, but Elizabeth went to sleep immediately we set off soon after eight o'clock. The other five children never stopped talking all the hour and a half it took us to reach the village.

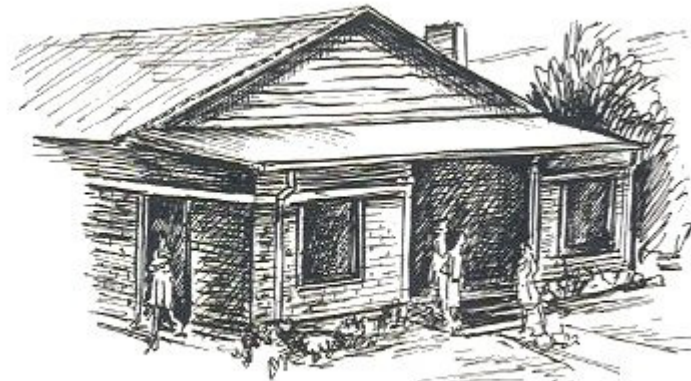
"In Melsetter Pat departed on farmer's business, and I unpacked, washed and settled my family on the back verandah of an absent friend's house, which had all the necessary facilities. I then blithely took the chair at the W.I. meeting, 'cool, calm and collected', with no hint of external responsibilities. Guiding the meeting through three months' accumulated business, with our secretary absent, took my full attention, and when the last subject was dealt with I was amazed that two hours had slipped by without my giving more than a passing thought to my brood.

"At lunch under the gum trees, with more of our family down from the School and other friends, we were five adults and sixteen children. Then we parked the children again, and went to 'enjoy' ourselves at a political meeting. Promptly at four I left, unpacked the general untidiness that had accumulated in the Land Rover, repacked according to the morning's routine, settled the children in, and collected Pat.

"On the drive home in a short while Noelle was fast asleep lying back on the cavas side, her little face gathering more streaks of dust as the journey continued. Jill and Margaret then fell asleep, while David and Gavin kept awake without any sign of over-tiredness. Elizabeth, who had slept in her pram in the afternoon, was full of bounce and tried to dance over me all the way home. So ended a worthwhile though somewhat harassing day. Within an hour the children were all bathed, fed and asleep, and peace reigned in the house."

The W.I. felt the need for its own premises which would, it was hoped, be of value to Melsetter as well as to its members. The Building Fund was started with £13.10 from a Bring & Buy Sale and more money was gradually raised through strenuous efforts. After prolonged negotiations Stand 170 in Heyns Street was bought from Lonrho in 1953 for £80 plus transfer fees, and it was decided to build each stage as and when there was enough money. In 1956, with over £1 000 in hand, the building was started, and in October 1957 the first meeting was held under the W.I.'s own roof in the finished Committee room.

With steady progress in raising money and steady work on the finishing details, the Hall was completed, furnished and fully paid for by Jun, 1961, and was insured with contents for £4000. Use has been made of the hall for many social occasions and meetings, and many visitors as well as W.I. members and their families have gratefully made use of the camping facilities available in the fully equipped Hall. In 1954 the W.I. celebrated its tenth birthday with a popular and amusing Book Tea for members and friends.



The W.I. Hall

In 1954 Rathmore Farms and Investments (Pvt.) Ltd, jointly owned by three Plunket brothers, bought land mainly in the Zunguni valley for afforestation, as they felt that the tremendous potential of Rhodesia as part of a multi-racial Federation was attractive for long-term investment; the fact that the part of the country most suitable for forestry was also one of the most beautiful was a fortunate coincidence. The company increased its holding to 3 500 acres, and interest in cattle and fruit-growing developed subsequently.

The farms were mostly undeveloped, and Belmont had been kept as a wild life sanctuary since 1937 by Major Saunders, who was a keen ornithologist and established small plantations round the house for the sake of the birds. On the boundary with Greenmount is a stretch of indigenous primeval forest. Shaun Plunket initiated development of the estate, and in 1957 Robin and his wife Jennifer (a grand-daughter of D'Urban Barry an 1890 Rhodesian pioneer) made their home on Rathmore, which is a family name. The situation of the original Kok house on Belmont lent itself to development. Extensions have been made to the house, in which a collection of modern African soapstone carvings blends well with the 18th century furniture, and the garden has been delightfully laid out.

By 1954 the Library was on a sound footing and a wide interest was taken in the flourishing enterprise, and the W.I. was delighted to be relieved of the responsibility when it was handed over to the representative Board of Trustees of the Memorial Hall, who appointed a Library Sub-Committee.

In 1956 Mr. and Mrs. Verne Reeves of Rusitu Mission contracted poliomyelitis; theirs were the only cases in the district and they both made an excellent recovery, but their illness caused much anxiety. The Biriiri Mission was started by Mr. and Mrs. Merritt and Iva Mae O'Brien as an educational centre with classes to Form IV, and the work has since expanded into an African Teacher Training College.

The Melsetter W.I. Homecraft Club was started, which functions under the guidance of W.I. members and is financially self-supporting and does a valuable service in teaching its African members domestic economy, hygiene, budgetting, and how to run their meetings. Some Club members have attended external leadership courses, and net-ball is a favourite relaxation. Other clubs in the district are also run by W.I. members.

Rabies caused considerable anxiety for some months; some people were bitten and had to undergo the very painful series of injections, and great care had to be exercised in all contacts with animals.

In 1957 the direct road to the Waterfall was widened for two-way traffic. and in 1958 the

Road Council did a good job repairing and gravelling the village streets, but any improvement to unsealed roads can only be temporary and the streets continue to be a problem.

In 1959 Harris and Olive McLeod joined Braam Olwage in building what was intended as a butchery, but soon afterwards Olwage gave up his interest and the McLeods started the Pork Pie Cafe.

Chapter 20

While the main road was being built and completed sections slowly tarred, improvements were gradually made on local roads with widening and gravelling and the replacement of gates by grids and of drifts by culverts and bridges. About 1959 the Ministry of Roads took over the 27 miles from the Nyahode main road bridge along the Nyahode valley, through Albany and up to Misty Hill.

The Nyahode river on Westward Ho!, first crossed by a drift and then by a causeway, was for many years a barrier in travelling when the river was frequently too deep for weeks on end for normal passenger cars to get through. One evening a family had an alarming crossing: at the approach the river did not look too bad, and they drove in. When the wave in the middle washed right over the headlights the only thing to do was to drive steadily on. The car stalled, luckily well beyond the middle, and all piled out on the lower side of the car and eventually managed to push it through, but it was an unpleasant experience in the dark with the river swirling madly all round.

It was hoped for many years that the status of the V.M.B. would be raised to that of a Town Management Board, but in 1960 the Government abolished Village Management Boards, and the Melsetter Local Committee, with even more restricted powers, became the local authority and acted until the next change in Local Government.

In a competition for the lay-out of the Arboretum 28 entries were received from nine countries, and the thirty-guinea prize donated by Dr. Alexander and B. D. Goldberg was won by a Leeds firm of Landscape Artists, and it was hoped to plant attractive and interesting exotics and a specimen of each indigenous tree which would support the climate, with each bearing a label giving scientific data. By 1960 the area was fenced, a storage dam constructed, two pools formed in the stream, paths demarcated, and over 220 trees planted. The Arboretum Committee struggled on with maintenance but supervision was difficult and funds were being used up. An appeal for more money was launched in the hope of collecting a capital sum of £3 500 to yield interest considered the minimum amount needed for the first seven years. The Arboretum, if completed, would have provided instruction and pleasure to many, but the appeal met with such a poor response that the scheme had to be abandoned.

Dr. Niblock retired as G.M.O. and for about two years Melsetter had no resident doctor and Chipinda G.M.O.s came once a week to see patients. With no doctor. no district nurse. and no



Clinic Melsetter was very badly served, and the position led to many protests by official bodies. The Government then rented the W.I. Committee room as the G.M.O.'s consulting room for a year, and work was started on a Doctor's house. By the time it was completed, Dr. Helen Godwin was the G.M.O. and running the practice from her home at Silverstream with the surgery in one wing of the new house. Towards the end of 1960 the Government took over the Camping Site for the African Clinic which is run by a fully trained nurse under the supervision of the G.M.O.

The Post Office was gradually expanded; the next-door front room on the verandah was taken over for postal sorting. Post boxes were installed, and an Exchange room was built on to the end of the Government building. The Postmaster's hours on duty depended on R.M.S. arrivals and departures: besides the normal hours he worked on three days a week till 6.30 p.m. if the buses were not late, but mail was frequently sorted by the light of pressure lamps; on the other three weekdays he made up mailbags for the R.M.S. from 6 a.m.

Heavy capital expenditure took place on the B.S.A. Co.'s Charter Estates when outlay in excellent housing for all employees and an extensive road network kept pace with afforestation. Schools, a clinic, a community hall, offices and self-dependent workshops kept two builders busy over five years.



Members of the Capricorn Africa Society in Melsetter realised the need to develop the domestic efficiency and elementary citizenship of rural African women in areas not already reached by others working in the Homecraft field. Tremendous efforts were made by a small local group who raised enough money to equip a Land Rover and to pay its staff and running expenses. Colonel Laurens van der Post gave the Land Rover he had taken on his Kalahari Expedition, and the service known as Kalahari Kate was started.

The work entailed driving some 1 000 miles a month into the Reserves over the roughest roads. Twenty-two communities were visited once a month, and the women paid for a visit towards expenses and were encouraged to meet each week. The work expanded, and homecraft training is given today by the team of two to 42 Clubs and six Youth Groups, and the programme now includes Area Days and Training Courses in farming, leadership, and tackling local problems.

Most Clubs make money from running small rural industries, and at Mutambara the C.M.U. started the first women's co-operative in Rhodesia, the successful Kumboedza Co-op. The C.M.U.'s success led to other official bodies starting similar services with units which now cover a great part of the country, and the C.M.U. experience in co-ordinating Clubs of various organisations led to its advice and assistance being sought in the formation of the Women's Group Liaison under the Rhodesia Council of Social Service. The Committee is convinced, after ten years' hard work and experiment, that it has been possible to achieve so much and now to consider a much wider range of activities because it has concentrated on regular instruction in a comparatively small area. The achievements of the women themselves are many, lasting and growing.

At Melsetter Country Club in the early 1960s some progress was apparent. A nine-hole golf course was laid out and planted to grass, the Golf Section was formed, and in 1964 fairways and greens for five holes had been planted and the first official golf match was held on home ground. Since then a small band of enthusiasts has battled to keep the nine holes of this scenically lovely course going.

In 1961 weekly children's tennis was started during school holidays, an excellent service which, with the coaching and encouragement given, led to the children's standard becoming very high.

Improvements to the Club house were badly needed, but the Club was in the doldrums and, in spite of members working very hard to keep it going, no spare money was available or could be expected and it was difficult even to find the money required to carry on and to pay interest on loans from members. The B.S.A. Co. helped with a large loan, materials and advice, and the hoped-for alterations were carried out in 1962.

A swimming pool was donated, which is very much appreciated and is a popular spot on warm days for adults and, whatever the weather, for children. The children's playground was equipped in 1963, and in 1968 the Club finances were helped with a substantial gift from a member who was leaving the district.

Re-arrangements in Government administration were made in 1962, and Melsetter's senior Government post became that of District Commissioner, whose office was staffed with a District Officer and several clerks.



The Outward Bound School

On a tiny plateau beneath the craggy peaks of the Chimanimani Mountains, in beautiful rugged country ten miles from the village, Melsetter Outward Bound Mountain School was established in 1961. Its motto is "To serve, to strive and not to yield."

Outward Bound aims to give boys and young men of any race and from all walks of life the chance to discover their potential for high moral and physical performance under arduous and adventurous, yet carefully controlled, conditions which challenge their capacities to the limit. Under these stimulating circumstances a lad develops his capacity for facing hazards, difficulties and hardships, and learns through contact with others under the same stresses the virtues of self-discipline, teamwork and social responsibility.

The Melsetter School is unique among Outward Bound Schools in that it caters for all age groups, from 13 to 60, and both sexes. Courses run all the year round, with school holiday courses for Junior Boys from 13½ to 19 and one for Girls from 16½ to 19; Standard courses for men between 19 and 30; Senior courses for men over 30; and a Women's course for the over 20s. To ensure that no one is left out, an annual Natural History Excursion caters for any age group and participants are taken into any area of their choice in the mountain and given the opportunity of following their inclinations in observation and study of local flora and fauna.

On a Standard course the students are collected in Umtali, and after a rugged four-hour lorry ride they are glad to find that the first thing on arrival is a swim. The clear, inviting water of Tessa's Pool, fed by a spectacular waterfall, is icy cold, and a swim there is the first assignment each dawn.

Each course is divided into patrols of eight under an instructor. Initially each patrol has a different captain each day, responsible for leadership, discipline and welfare of his patrol, but about mid-course students elect their own captain for the remainder of the course.

Inhibitions soon break down when living and working together. and a cross-section of personalities, wills, abilities and misgivings, is mixed together. The staff has found that the larger the course and the more varied the individuals' backgrounds the better. The students are presented with mental and physical challenges which will, at some stage, test every man to his limit. They learn that with the correct mental approach anything is possible and that good teamwork coupled with consideration for others are the keys to success.

The early part is devoted to physical toughening and basic training in camp. On an elaborate rope course strung between trees students do a Tarzan act on a liana-like nylon rope, and they undergo full basic instruction in rock climbing and rope work on nearby cliffs. There is map-reading, compass work, first aid, and mountain rescue. Cross-country running, ball games, orienteering and evasion exercises, all serve to fill a very full working day which starts at 5 a.m. in summer and 5.30 in winter.

The culmination of the day is a session on the circuit training course which is completed by 5.30 p.m., giving students a well-deserved break until the evening meal at 6.45 p.m. In the evenings there are discussions or talks. Weather makes no difference to turning out, and it is only in very exceptional circumstances that Outward Round is confined to camp by the elements.



The initial phase is the overture to what is euphemistically called a quiet walk: two full days away in the mountains, when the patrol is accompanied by their instructor who is able then to ensure that the men are fully conversant with the essential techniques for operating in mountainous areas.

After this a five-day expedition enables students to show what they can achieve on their own and points to powers of leadership and determination. The trip covers distances of over 100 miles across some of the most spectacular and difficult country in Africa, and in addition to normal hazards of any mountain range, meetings with small herds of elephants are not infrequent.

Wendy Gibson recently attended a Senior Women's (The Aunties') course and described a three-day expedition during it:

"Up at 5 a.m. Tea and toast, and ready to go. We had packed our 25-lb rucksacks the previous night with food, sleeping bags, mess tins and utensils, panga, groundsheet, —and billy can, the most important item, with endless uses. Five of us set off in the early light and slowly climbed up the Hadunge to the top of Sphinx Pass. Apart from the clank of billycans tied to rucksack straps, the only sounds were from the hundreds of birds and the murmurings of the river in the gorge below. A very steep climb, in places only a narrow path clinging to the cliff face — quite frightening..

"Stopped at 9 a.m. beside a large pool, cooked and consumed an enormous amount of pbrridge and drank gallons of very sweet tea, all finding that we needed extra sugar after using so much energy. The crows were a menace, and pinched anything left lying around uncovered. After an hour we set off for Skeleton Pass, admiring the last of the aloes in flower, most attractive peeping out of the rock-covered hillside.



Martin Falls

"Stopped at the top of the Pass for a breather and photographs of the lovely view fight down into Mozambique. A steep climb down the other side, moss and a great variety of ferns, a clump of montbretia, and white, yellow and blue moreas in abundance. Lunch of peanuts and raisins, hard tack and the inevitable tea.

"Reached camp at Portage Cave at 4 p.m. After a swim in the icy river, made camp and prepared 'dinner' before dark, an out-of-this-world hash of tinned stuffs: our appetites were enormous! A long day: we relaxed by the fire, talking over what we had seen and planning our route for the next day. Asleep early — wakened during the night by eland going down to the river to drink.



Ropework

"Away after breakfast, and mid-morning reached Martin Falls, so beautiful with a big pool at the bottom; we spent time just drinking in the scenery, and then settled ourselves in the spacious Kuraseka Cave. Spent the afternoon exploring round about; the nearby Tucker Falls are not as impressive as Martin, but very lovely. Found a big area of pincushion proteas.

"On the third morning we left at dawn with mist swirling in and out of the peaks, most attractive, but an eerie feeling, and we made sure we stayed close behind one another. Hiking in the damp weather was lovely, but by the time we stopped for breakfast the sun had appeared and made it hot for walking. On the way back we saw a troop of baboons playing in a salt pan.

"After lunch we started the long haul down the Hadunge, and were green with envy when a helicopter flew over — we felt it could have offered us a lift. Arrived back at the School, all very dirty and very very tired, but with a feeling of satisfaction and of having enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. I was thankful that I had taken the trouble to get reasonably fit. One or two of the girls thought they were coming to a holiday camp, and suffered agonies from stiffness and sore feet!

"Naturally there were times when one felt like pushing 'someone' over the edge of a cliff, but on the whole the students were a super bunch and we all got on very well together. (It was wonderful being called a 'student' at the ripe old age of 33!) The instructors were marvellous — they had to put up with so much nonsense, it is a wonder they didn't push the lot of us over the edge of a cliff! The food

was yummy, and there was plenty of it so one couldn't diet at all. (Urn!)

"I'll never regret having done the course. I found it something different, something I thoroughly enjoyed as a challenge (and something I doubt if I'll ever do again!)."

Fires have always been a hazard when they have been lit for burning fireguards or rubbish or veld for grazing or when they have started from lightning strikes, and have got away and swept through grazing areas and through the mountains, damaging veld and flora and fauna.

The village has been endangered many times but somehow no really serious damage has been done: the old gums and cypresses have presented magnificent sights as some have caught and blazed up to 150 feet; a lucky change of wind has often prevented whole plantations or houses from being burnt, as happened at The Gwasha recently when the house with its thick belt of trees all round was entirely surrounded by a blazing fire.

Generations of children have memories of the School being threatened: on one occasion all the children were evacuated to the Police Camp, and on another all were assembled in the middle of the night on the netball court while the fire blazed in the trees surrounding the school; in each instance almost superhuman efforts resulted in the fires being contained just in time.



A plantation fire

Farmers in isolated homesteads have had their lands damaged and their houses threatened, with particular anxiety when roofs were thatched. The danger of potential damage became very much greater when much of Melsetter was planted to trees.

The district usually has up to 12' of rain in the six months of the dry season, but the 1962 winter was the driest on record and many parts had no rain at all for months.

September 1962 ushered in some months of tension as Melsetter faced a new form of threat by fire and the words arson and firebugs were added to the daily vocabulary, as a handful of fire-

raisers defied the organised and armed forces of the law and threatened Rhodesia's timber industry.

A few unexpected fires started, including two on Nzuzu and Boskatrand, and on 20th September fires started simultaneously on Westward Ho!, Settler and Silverstream, and during the next two weeks there were reports of fires on most days. The Police Reserve was mobilised, units of the R.L.I. and S.A.S. were stationed in the district, helicopter patrols took place daily, and paratroops were dropped at strategic points.

The forest estates extended over about 40 square miles with only the two main roads and rough country roads twisting through the mountainous country, with hundreds of miles of forest tracks carved out by bulldozer or blasted by dynamite as access roads for Land Rovers and logging trucks. The forests of planted timber, the tough close bush and scrub, and the rise and fall of the terrain, made an ideal hiding place even from patrolling aircraft and perfect country for guerilla warfare, especially arson.

After the long dry months the slightest spark in the tinder-dry bracken and bush under the trees could set off a blaze which was almost unstoppable. Most of the trees were under five years old and had not yet been pruned: the lower branches growing close together near the ground made natural fuel for the licking flames, and once a fire had started it was difficult for the firefighters to stop it.



Arson on Gwendingwe Estate

The B.S.A. Company was able to confine its fires to about 200 acres because of its centralised warning system and a force of radio-controlled Land Rovers, a Cessna plane, 24-hour lookouts from fire towers, 17 European and about 1 500 African employees, and water-trucks, stirrup pumps, beaters and other equipment. At the first flicker of smoke a radio report was relayed from the plane to headquarters, and Land Rovers and water-trucks set out for the spot laden with firefighters. On one occasion when a firebug lit three fires within ten minutes, he was actually

seen lighting the third, but could not be caught as it was at night and four miles from headquarters.

The situation was complicated by the fact that most Europeans were in the Police Reserve or special Police forces. After their 12-hour shift on police duty on road blocks and patrols the Companies' employees snatched a couple of hours' sleep before going back to duty on their estates during their 12 hours off police duty, and private farmers and their wives had to travel home and do their farming and housekeeping in their off time. African Police Reservists also did their share of duties.

The Companies were geared to deal with the emergency and were usually able to contain fires on their estates, but farmers also suffered losses. Albany's main loss, estimated at about £2 000, was caused by neighbours' burning back in an effort to make everything safe when Sunnyside, an unoccupied farm, was set alight. The fire got away, swept through dry grass on Wanganella, through acres of mature wattle on Albany, and on up to Heathfield, where damage estimated at £10 000 was done. Driving through the devastated areas was a sad business during the first week in October.

Things quietened down a bit, but on 14th October fires were lit on Albany and Nyabamba, seen at 3 a.m. on a beautiful still moonlit night, and quickly put out. Police and tracker dogs came in the morning to follow up any spoor.

The firebugs used many ingenious devices to set off fires when they themselves were nowhere in the vicinity. Other sporadic fires occurred later in 1962, and then again in September 1964 and 1965, but the efforts were not as concentrated as they had been originally. Some of the instigators were caught and served varying sentences.

The incitement to acts of subversion was undoubtedly caused by external pressures, and only a few local Africans were influenced by them. Farm and forest labourers carried on with their normal work, and turned out when called upon to fight the fires. No European found any feeling of personal animosity, and when travelling was necessary one was greeted in normal friendly fashion by Africans along the road, but it was deeply regretted that anything should mar the excellent relations between the Melssetter peoples who have always got on well together. Once terrorism and intimidation of their own people by undesirable African elements ceased, relations continued in their normal harmonious fashion.



The fire-towers are manned day and night during the dry season. Recently a fire-watcher on duty spotted a plume of smoke from a lightning strike in a plantation. He lifted his telephone and found it had been put out of action by the lightning. He thereupon ran, quite contrary to instructions, to the scene of the fire, put it out before it could get a good hold, and then ran down to the office to report!

Everyone was very pleased as tarred sections of the new road were opened to traffic and the section between the Nyahode and Biiwiri rivers over Skyline was particularly appreciated as it did away with the need for travelling over the cuttings, but in February 1963 near-disaster struck. December and January were fairly wet and from the 25th January there was steady rain every single day until the end of February, and falls of up to 36" were recorded on farms during the 28 days of February.

The rain became particularly heavy, with falls of up to 4" on the already soaked ground, about the 19th February and then the Skyline road gave real trouble. The damage was very impressive as in many places the enormous fills over the valleys gave way and caused subsidence of the road, and the fills were washed out completely underneath the outside edge of the tar leaving half the road with a thin skin of tar and nothing underneath it. Light traffic only, travelling slowly all the time, was allowed to use the road, and the Roads Department moved in. The road bristled with DEADLY HAZARD notices, and it took eighteen months to get the road in proper order again.

Serious damage was done at the same time to local roads. In one night on the Nyahode road a dam burst and stones and boulders were washed on to the road, and a bridge and a culvert were completely washed away. With the main local roads out of action farmers had to travel by devious routes, and old abandoned tracks were brought back into service for slow progress.

Hazards have included trees falling down during heavy rain and blocking roads. This has sometimes led to travellers having to turn round in the wet dark night and travelling anything up to an extra 40 miles in order to get home, or else borrowing beds in neighbours' houses — on at least one occasion without the sleeping hosts' knowledge!

In the village, Mr. and Mrs. Theunissen of Beverley Park opened their small departmental store, and various African stores have also operated from the same time.

In March 1964 the W.I. was hostess to the N.F.W.I.R. Executive Council of 53 members, when one member from each W.I. in the country and others in official positions came to Melsetter by luxury coach from Salisbury and in private cars from other directions. Most of the visitors were accommodated at the Hotel, and many got up early the next morning to watch the sun rise above the mountains and to have a glorious morning walk with the scent of pine and cypress in the air and the sparkle of dew on the grass, before strolling up to the W.I. Hall for the serious business of the day.

Melsetter members provided lunch in the Memorial Hall, and many old friendships were renewed. In the evening the W.I. entertained its official guests and many Melsetter residents with sundowners and supper at the Country Club, Derek Barbanell, Warden of the Outward Bound Mountain School, showed beautiful colour slides of the School and the Chimanimani Mountains, and then Melsetter was entertained with songs by its illustrious guests, who nearly brought the roof down with a spirited grand finale chorus.

The following day the Council business was completed by lunchtime and everybody piled into the luxury bus, the Charter school bus and two cars and set off for a tour of the district. One car was equipped with a compass and as it set out a passenger asked: "Do we travel north, south, east or west?" and was puzzled by the driver's reply: "Yes", but a few minutes later after the compass needle had swung due north, east and south with a little bit of west, she said thoughtfully: "I see what you mean."

Among the visitors was Dorothy Qualle, who recorded that “I felt rather Rip van Winkel when I recalled the road to Tilbury twelve years ago: nine gates to open and close and three spruits to cross in eleven miles; now the rivers are bridged and the gates replaced by excellent grids. Stubbings, the Estate Manager, led the convoy to the top of a hill to the Haroni View — quite magnificent. Then on past the old homestead which Cecil Rhodes visited and through more plantations to Springfield, where Mrs. Nethersole gave us yet another magnificent tea — what superb cooks all Melssetter women are! —and a glorious view of the mountains. Then through lovely country, passing through patches of indigenous forest and glimpsing tree ferns in the kloofs, to Rathmore, where Mr. and Mrs. Plunket welcomed us warmly and stayed us with flagons at a very enjoyable party.

“The following day, farewells to our very kind hostesses, with more gratitude than could be properly expressed. Melssetter W.I., with only 27 members, had given every thought to our comfort and not overlooked a single detail, and made this one of the happiest Council meetings any of us have ever attended.”

In June 1964 there were reports of stones across the main road which stopped cars driven by Africans, who moved the stones and proceeded without further interference. The first European to arrive at such a roadblock was murdered.

On 4th July P. J. A. Oberholtzer, aged 45, father of six children, was driving home to Silverstream from Umtali with his wife and three-year old daughter. Past the Biriiri Mission in the darkening evening they started up the winding road towards the Biriwiri bridge. 74 miles from Umtali their lights lit up a line of stones and rocks across the tar, and Mr. Oberholtzer started to get out to remove some so that his car could proceed. He was immediately attacked with a shower of stones, some dark figures gathered round him, and he was stabbed in the chest. He shut the car door and drove over the stones, and the car overturned at the edge of the road. The attackers smashed the windscreen and threw petrol and lighted matches into the cab of the truck, but, before their efforts to set the car on fire could succeed, another car came, up behind, and the attackers vanished into the night.

Mr. Oberholtzer had died at the wheel of his car, and Lawrence Marshall and Mrs. Martindale took Mrs. Oberholtzer and the child to the Biriwiri Road Camp, from where messages were sent for Police and doctor.

After a search, James Hlamini and Victor Mlamo were arrested, found guilty of murder, and in due course hanged. Matthew Tresha was later apprehended, convicted of helping in the attempt, and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. A fourth member of the gang escaped from Rhodesia. One of the gang was a local man, the others were Rhodesian-born but had lived for some years in Zambia.

In 1965 the W.I. held its 21st birthday party at the Club, to which all Melssetter residents were invited and everybody enjoyed a hilarious and entertaining evening.

The Melssetter Amateur Dramatic Society has produced some excellent plays, and many entertaining sketches have been put on at the Club on social occasions, and there have been Gay Nineties evenings, a Palace of Variety with Bunny Girls, happy New Year's Eve dances, Police Balls, Scottish dancing, and many other enjoyable dances and concerts. A small Art Club has some talented members.



A Pony Club to encourage young riders was started by Teddie Winwood and Jack Howard, which is a Branch of the Pony Club which has headquarters in Warwickshire, and successful school-holiday camps have been attended by young riders from Melsetter, Cashel and Chipinga at Tilbury, The Corner, Springvale, the Country Club, Silverstream and in Chipinga.

In 1967 the 92 miles of full width tarred road to Umtali was completed. Magnificent though the drive over the Scenic road is, no Melsetter resident regrets that it is no longer the main road.

Deaths of prominent residents saddened the community. In 1966 there died John Kruger, and Rookwood was taken over by his son Bettix; Ted Allott, by then frail and no longer taking an active part; and Giellie Bredenkamp, a very kind person, always ready to help, who was known affectionately as the Mayor of Melsetter — his widow Nellie moved to Umtali, and their son Mike took over the butchery and farming interests and moved to Dairy Plot with Estelle. In 1968 John Olivey died — Mickey carried on Sawerombi helped by their sons Tony and Charles; and that year Fred Delaney also died. In 1969 Edward Green died, and Mutzarara is now run by his son George with his wife Margy.

Celebrations of 80th birthdays were held in 1969: Olive Allott, gay and sprightly and active as ever; and Joey Delaney, who was one of the most active dancers at her party in the W.I. Hall which lasted till the early hours of the morning.



Chapter 21

In the Tribal Trust Lands in the Melssetter administrative district the population has increased to approximately 60 000 from the 5000 or so who were here when the Europeans came. The VaUngweme have no land of their own as it was refused when offered, and Chief Chikukwa still has his home on Martin Forest Reserve with many of his followers through in Portuguese territory.

In Mutambara and Muwushu T.T.Ls, with the introduction of European medicine, the cessation of tribal warfare, and a more settled way of life, the population increased while the game decreased and natural plants became insufficient to support so many people. In order to stop poverty, hardship and suffering and to prevent monetary loss and waste Government investigated the problem, and the result was the establishment of Irrigation Schemes: Nyanyadzi in Muwushu T.T.L. and Chakohwe and Mutambara in Mutambara T.T.L.

These schemes have proved successful although there are attendant problems. On the credit side is the change from a bare subsistence economy to food sufficiency and a cash economy for a significant proportion of the tribes, which has benefited not only those who directly derive their livelihood on the Schemes but also their families in other parts: the onus of responsibility in the tribal extended family relationship is clearly borne out in the spending of money earned by the wealthier and more sophisticated for the benefit of their brethren who are still in the subsistence level of farming, and this exerts a tremendous influence.

Among the problems which have resulted from the Irrigation Schemes is the breakdown of



tribal disciplines through the traditional leaders, the chiefs and the headmen: people have had to be brought in to the Schemes from many parts of the country and this has resulted in a conglomeration of people with no united purpose, single culture, discipline or social custom, and there is not the same respect for tradition and authority on irrigation schemes that one finds in the dry land areas.

Apart from the irrigation schemes, development in Mutambara and Muwushu continues to be a problem, and a solution is being sought. It is felt that stock-farming may be the answer with the possibility of integrating agricultural practices and thus bringing some profit to all concerned; the cattle could be bred and weaned on the highveld by the dryland plot-holders who would buy fodder for winter feeding which could be grown as one of the two annual crops reaped on the irrigation schemes.

Development in Ndima goes ahead, although there is a peculiar set-up in administration: dealings in Rhodesia are with a chief who has to go for his orders to a foreign country as he can make no move without permission from his very conservative superiors and tribal spirits through the VaSwikro in Mozambique, and this has resulted in some hold-up in carrying out recommended agricultural advances. A small area of Ndima comes directly under Chief Mutema in Chipinga administration district.

Ngorima, including Ndima, is probably one of the most potentially wealthy T.T.Ls. in Rhodesia from the point of view of natural resources: climate, good rainfall averaging over 60", little or no frost, regular breezes, and very little evidence of disease. There has been a great deal of agricultural development, nearly all tropical and many sub-tropical crops can be grown, and over 30% of the total area is under cultivation.

There is also a big population pressure and it is impressive that the 26 000 acres of Ngorima and Ndima support a population of approximately 10 000, who are moving very fast into a cash economy. Government assists with the establishment of councils and co-operatives, and through Agricultural Extension the crops best suited to the area and which will bring in the best returns are being established. Farmers have done very well with a variety of crops including coffee, pineapples, bananas, grains, vegetables and spices: one farmer has succeeded in educating his children and has sent one to university in England out of his profits.

Ngorima is the only T.T.L. in the Melssetter area to have a Council, and it is having a struggle to function well: the Councillors have been taken on leadership courses and to see functioning Councils in other areas, and while they themselves are enthusiastic and keen on improvement, they find that the people are not yet ready to accept radical changes and have to be educated slowly. Chief Ngorima, the fifth in line, who was recently elected a Senator in the Rhodesian Senate, is progressive, but finds that he cannot move faster than his councillors will allow: if he goes too far ahead of them he may lose their confidence.

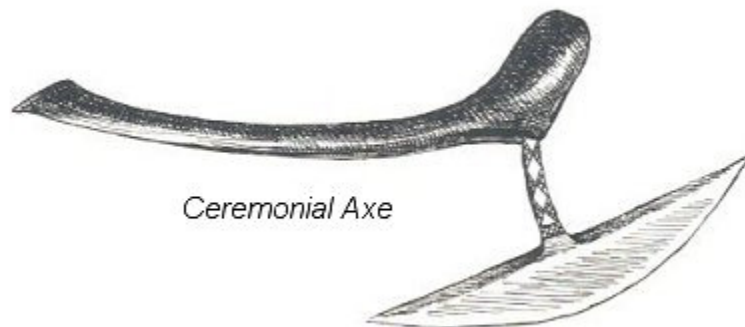
The other chiefs will not have Councils in their areas: their attitude, and that of their people, is that the modern Government is European, and they prefer that Europeans should continue to govern them. There is resistance to their being ruled by their fellow tribesmen as they do not trust one another — with some reason, as there have been many instances of people in executive offices using public money for private purposes.

The Chiefs had great influence, but since their powers were restricted after the advent of the Europeans they have become withdrawn and inclined to consider that their main function is that of guardian and custodian of traditional customs. This has made them ultra-conservative and not interested in promoting change. Government authorities are battling to prove to them the need for beneficial progress. Many of their people have travelled and lived in towns and entered into activities which are different from the tribal ones. and these people are ant

to look down on their chiefs as insufficiently progressive.

In all the T.T.Ls. great developments have taken place with Government assistance particularly since the last war. Before that there was resistance to such things as modern medicine: the tribesman preferred to go to his nganga whose ways and methods he understood, and even today he is happy to consult with tribal spirits, the mondoro or Vadzimu, at every opportunity, particularly to seek supernatural methods of treatment when modern methods have failed.

The early resistance was gradually overcome when modern methods showed a quicker, easier and less painful cure: the prevention and cure of malaria and the quick results of aspirin were much appreciated and injections have made a great impression. It has come to be recognised that European medicine is superior in many ways to treatment by the nganga and herbalists through the tribal spirits, but there are well-known witchdoctors around here who are still consulted on occasion.



Before the war there was resistance to education and many local schools were only a third full. When encouraged to send their children to school, the kraal heads and the parents said that they and their parents had managed without education and they did not see why their children needed any. Sending them to school would mean a great upset as each child had certain duties to perform: the girls had to fetch water and wood and the boys had to herd the goats and cattle, and if they went to school there would be nobody to do this work. Sometimes when Government officials went round they found only the parents at home — the children had been sent up into the hills to hide.

The need for education was felt first in the urban areas which cannot, however, be isolated from the rural areas as there is constant communication between them. When buses became regular there was much travelling between town and country, and people who had seen something of life outside the tribal areas realised the need for more education and literacy and brought home their ideas and were assisted by returning soldiers who had seen service in other countries. Other contributory factors were newspapers in the vernacular and the influence of the radio.

After the war educational facilities developed rapidly in Masetter. Mainly under the Missions many primary schools were established and Secondary Schools opened at Mutambara, Rusitu, Biriwiri and Nyanyadzi. 90% of the children of the district can now get five years of schooling at least: there is a fallout from Grade V and only those with marked ability can go forward to the secondary schools, but the number going to Upper Primary Schools is probably higher than in other districts, in spite of the fact that in a few very remote areas little need is yet felt for any education.

With their religion of ancestor worship, individuals even today get into situations where they feel that there is nothing that they themselves can do, and go to their spirits to seek advice, although in some instances much of the ritualistic preparation to ensure the proper approach to the spirits has fallen into disuse because so many who were qualified to carry it out died without passing on their knowledge. Recently chiefs have been criticised for not carrying out the proper processes for propitiating the spirits, and some of their ancient customs are being revived. When Chief Tamanewenyu of Muwushu died in January 1970 every cockerel in the Reserve was slaughtered on the orders of his son, one of the VaKuru.

Various animals, birds and insects are associated with the spirits and are taboo and may not be killed or eaten.

In tribal custom the extended family is still very strong with specific rules for individuals to inherit their responsibility of looking after and caring for relations who may be left without visible means of support. In 1968 there was some food shortage, and European organisations handed out food to those who they considered were in most need of it, without consulting the chiefs. This led to a certain amount of criticism, as it was felt that the Europeans were breaking the custom of extended family relationships, and if somebody breaks the cycle then the relatives consider that they are no longer responsible for the person who has been supported by outsiders.

There are seven Purchase Area farms in the District and these, under title, are being developed satisfactorily. Most of the Tribal Trust Lands have flourishing business centres, and in all road improvement has led to general development.

The forestry Companies carried on tree planting and expansion. All have fire towers, and between them they have well over 1 000 miles of internal roads built and being maintained. The Forestry Commission, Charter and Tilbury have their own sawmills, and on Gwendingwe the sawmill is run by a sister Company, A. C. Moore (Pvt.) Ltd., to whom the Estate delivers the logs and the further handling is an independent process. Heavy timber lorries transport timber from Melsetter to Umtali in a steady stream.

Melsetter's appearance has changed with the coming of the Companies as tree-clad hill-sides cover vast areas, but the magnificent views may still be seen. Afforestation is established, and it is envisaged that industries based on wood may follow. One snag appears in the sawmills' incinerators, which belch forth smoke all day and night and spoil the lovely clear air.

The Rhodesian Wattle Co. is small by world standards, and when the world extract market became oversupplied they considered ways of diversifying and invested in cattle which are run on all the Estates: on Charleswood wattle was given up entirely in favour of cattle and large acreages of maize grown as feed. Sugarcane is grown on some Chipinga estates, and raw sugar is manufactured at Silverstream factory during four months of the year, with the production of wattle extract limited to the other eight months. In 1969 the Rhodesian Wattle Company was bought by Lonrho Ltd.

The Forestry Commission has a Research Station at Muguzo, where forest trees from all parts of the world are raised for experimental planting in different parts of the district. Sample plots have been marked and measured on Commission land and on most private forests.



Charter Estates

On Charter Estates planting rates were increased from 1 500 to 5 500 acres a year spread over eight sections, each of which is managed by a European forester and 50-180 Africans, with a Forest Officer in charge. Of the 34000 acres so far planted the principal species are *Patula* with up to 20% of *Elliottii* and *Taeda* pine, and nearly 2000 acres of eucalypts, and a further 3 000 acres will be planted when all the suitable land is in production. The purchase of further land extended Charter boundaries, and a slow consolidation has resulted in a single large holding today of 45000 acres in the upper Nyahode catchment, with Welgelegen a separate 6500 acres, and the Chartered Company is the largest private timber grower in the country.

About \$4 million has been invested, of which some \$2,200,000 represents plantations, and at maturity this figure will have risen to \$8 to \$10 million as conventional sawmills keep pace with timber yields. The mill at Fairfield processes three quarters, rising to one and a quarter million cubic feet log input yearly derived principally from thinnings; it yields mainly boxwood and the better processed building lumber will follow in increasing proportion as the forests become older; and plans are well advanced for sawmill stages advancing to two million cubes input by 1971, and later to 7-8 million.

The General Manager of the autonomous Eastern Forest Estates directs forest activity, and Charter has a staff of 18 Europeans, with the foresters supported by a technical and administrative headquarter unit. 670 Africans are employed, of whom 100, under three Europeans, run the sawmill. In 1965 the B.S.A. Co. amalgamated with two mining financial companies and became Charter Consolidated, and shortly afterwards Charter Forest Estates with other interests in Rhodesia were sold to Anglo-American who are today responsible for control and finance.

Tilbury Estate is a hive of activity and has a population of 12 European families and 560 African employees.

Gwendingwe Estate is divided into four sections each with its own labour force, machines and headquarters: Headquarters section under the Manager consists of administration, workshop, maintenance, repairs, houses and water supplies; Brackenbury is self-sufficient under the Farm Manager and assistant; Forestry has a Forest Manager and assistant; and the Orchard Manager runs his section with his assistant. About 5 500 acres of pines, 1 000 acres of wattle, and 200 acres of gums have been planted, and further planting is continuing.

In round figures 300 acres a year are felled and 400 planted, so that the plantation will come into a sustained yield with the same number of trees being felled and planted after 20 years, after which capital charges become impossible; enormously heavy logs cost more to log; and with the trend towards reconstituted board, finger-jointing and lamination, large diameters are not desirable. With 17-year old trees logs are quite often 20' long with a 14" or 15" tip, and are difficult to handle especially in steep country.

Through the dry season two Europeans and about 50 Africans are on standby fire duty, and the crews of the fire vehicles are on duty all the time: they have their own compound and are always there, always familiar with the routine, and always trained. To compensate for their long spell on duty they are given two months' paid leave in the wet season, and seem very happy with the arrangement.

Gwendingwe employs, with seasonal fluctuations, between 350 and 400, and with their families the African population is between 600 and 800, and the development of the compounds in the form of African villages is encouraged. Each Section's bossboy is the village headman and has the responsibility of seeing that village life is organised on traditional lines and that the disciplines which would guide their lives at home are observed.

The labourers tend to group into tribal or family groups, and go to work with their own bossboy whose position is gradually enhanced as he grows older and the younger men, who were children under him, come into his gang. This system is working very well, and there is much visiting between the villages and inter-village competition in sports and other activities.

The housing is round brick huts, cement-floored, and a family unit is two living-huts and a kitchen-hut; a unit may also be occupied by four bachelors, two sharing each of the living-huts, and cooking communally. Pay is given in lieu of rations, but meat or fish is issued weekly. The trading store is leased to outside interest. The Estate sells commercial African beer but has not yet built a beerhall; no brewing is allowed, but the staff can buy as much as they want: rather than all walking up to the centre, they usually send their women along to bring back ten or twenty gallons to the village, where they then have their own beerdrink.

The clinic is simply a casualty clearing station and ordinary clinic, but has some facilities for inpatients with a female ward and some compound units outside for men. The clinic has as a major aim a Family Planning campaign and has plans for mothercraft and a wide range of child care and hygiene training. It is supervised by Annabel Hayter who is a fully trained Sister, and is run by an African nurse whose husband is a Public Health visitor based at Gwendingwe and who also does public health work in Mutema Tribal Trust Land. A tremendous number of patients come from Mutema, and as this is becoming a problem a small fee may have to be charged.

There are about 90 pupils in the school, for which Gwendingwe Estate supplies and maintains the buildings and pays for the equipment. The Government pays the teachers and the school is supervised by Rusitu Mission. Education up to Grade Five for the families of all employees is entirely free.

With so much land having been bought by the forestry companies, the numbers of farmers in the area were greatly reduced, and they carried on with the lines previously established and with continued experiments. Recently many farms have been sub-divided and this has resulted in intensive development on a greater number.

Maize is grown generally in quantities sufficient for rations and stockfeed. Wheat was again tried on Albany: the first excellent crop ripened magnificently but unforeseen and unavoidable delays occurred and only a portion was harvested before early rain ruined the rest, and the second crop was destroyed by rust.

Many attempts have been made to grow vegetables on a commercial scale for the fresh market, for canning or for seed, but high transport costs and hazards in growing, harvesting and marketing have killed the enterprises. Potatoes have varied in their returns, the best being from AA seed grown at over 6 000', and reasonable returns are always hoped for from ware potatoes grown as a cash crop: a disastrous failure was during the February 1963 floods, when on one farm 35 acres were drowned and rotted in the land.



Grain crops

The main bugbear of internal parasites in sheep has been overcome, and sheep on a fairly small scale are carried successfully on a number of farms. Gwendingwe Estate plans to aim their sheep enterprise at the fine wool market and to supply a very high quality lamb which will sell more cheaply than beef, which Rhodesia needs for export.

Fruit production continues to be a successful interest on many farms, although some peach orchards were found to be uneconomic and were dug out, and a citrus development was abandoned when water supplies diminished owing to the forest plantations surrounding it. Avocado pears show promise, and apples grow very well in selected parts.

Gwendingwe Estate went ahead with large orchard plantings with the purchase of Fairview in 1959, a line where they had precedent as so much trial and error work had been done by Bill Hanmer. Their orchard is roughly 150 acres, entirely apples apart from a few individual trees for the use of the staff. They have adopted a semi-palmette system, with the trees 12'6" apart one way and 25' the other, avoiding the expense and trouble of supporting them on wire trellises and gaining the advantage of being able to use cyclone sprays on the hedge of trees. The Estate expects to be able to cope for one more season only with their present packing system, as this year's crop is estimated to be double last year's crop and this compounding is expected to continue.

The picking will be into bins in the field, mechanically loaded onto trucks, or use may be made of the semi-trailer bin; it is anticipated that more mechanisation will be necessary. They hope eventually to have close on 18 000 trees and to produce between 80 000 and 100 000 cases of apples a year, and for the picking season 1970-71 hope to be cold-storing in bulk on the Estate a considerable proportion of the late crop in order to extend the season.

Great interest has been taken in the possibility of tea-growing in this district which experts say is ideal. In 1965 a Tea Committee worked on this potentially valuable extension of

interests, but the financial obstacles were insuperable and the project did not get under way then, but interest is still maintained.



Coffee growing on a commercial scale is being expanded rapidly in selected frost-free areas. Yields of up to half a ton per acre from 3-year old trees and of up to one ton from 5-year old trees have already been reaped, and yields of one and a half to two tons are confidently expected when the trees come into full bearing. It is a long-term project in the initial stages, but excellent returns are anticipated after about six years.

Disease in other countries has had a depressing effect on world coffee production, and this has stabilised the price at a high figure, currently about \$800 a ton, which is expected to continue for some years, with a bright outlook for this disease-free, area. Each coffee farm has its own small factory for initial processing, and a central mill has been erected in Chipinga.

Macadamia nuts show great promise. A few trees have been growing in the district for some years, and, with the now known potential value, more extensive plantings are being made with grafted trees.

Many farms continue with cattle, both for slaughter and breeding stock, and a recent venture is the establishment of a stud herd of Simmentalers, with initial importations direct from Austria.

Melsetter's very great potential for the intensive development of high-carrying pastures is gradually being realised, and many farmers are taking a practical interest in this aspect of production. The research done on Henderson Station on the very high grazing potential of certain grasses when suitably fertilised has pointed the way. In Melsetter the prospects of good profits from this form of production are enhanced by the very long growing season of some ten months or more, the drip climate and high rainfall, and the proved suitability of the greater part of the area for the establishment of legumes in association with the grasses, which effects a substantial saving in fertiliser costs.

Holiday cottages on Nhuka, Claverdon, Hillside and Alicedale are proving popular. Bill and Helen (Kloppers) Staff started farming Alicedale in 1959. Frank and Annette Elias took occupation of the old Pasture Station in 1967, and called the farm Nhuka, chiNdau for eland, because of the large number of eland which grazed there; they have cattle and sheep, a dairy herd, hens and pigs, but plan to concentrate on beef cattle and sheep as they establish more pastures.

An exhaustive study of the area was made by the Department of Conservation and Extension and their Melsetter Regional Plan was published in 1968. It is of great technical and scientific interest and copies are currently readily available.

During 1967 meetings were held and a Local Government Commission investigated the formation of a Rural Council based on the Road Council area and decided that a Rural Council would be the right thing for Melsetter. The last minuted meeting of the Melsetter

Local Committee was in December 1967, and their function was taken over by the Rural Council which, after elections had been held in the six demarcated wards, held its inaugural meeting in November 1968.

Looking after the Memorial Hall, this “baby” which had been left by a previous generation to the district with no means for its upkeep, continued to be a problem. It served a wonderful purpose as the only public meeting place for very many years but less use was made of it as other facilities became available, and when the Rural Council was established it seemed that this would be the correct body to administer the Hall. In April 1969 a public meeting of residents of the district resolved that the Hall should be donated to the Rural Council; that the name of the Melssetter War Memorial Hall should be retained; and that the Hall should continue to be available to the public as long as the need existed. On 28th November 1969



the Board of Trustees held their final meeting and the Title Deeds were transferred to the Rural Council and the funds in hand were given to the Memorial Hall Library.

The Library sub-Committee of the Memorial Hall Board of Trustees carried on for some years, but as it continued to expand it became an autonomous body and the Library Committee has continued to do excellent work in providing a well-stocked and well-run Library.

Telephone party lines have increased to twelve and there are 160 telephone subscribers, some of whom have their own extension systems. Postal services have improved, with a daily mail service to and from Umtali.

At the Police Camp there is an establishment of fourteen who cover an area of little over 700 square miles. The Chimanimani mountains are patrolled on foot, cloud lifting and weather permitting, and elephant, buffalo and sable are sometimes met. The Melssetter Shellhole of the M.O.T.H.S. has recently been established.

The Road Motor Service continues to be the main public means of communication; the regular scheduled goods lorries travel mainly on the main road, with a weekly service on the Scenic road and services to various points in the district; and special goods and cattle lorries are available when required. There is a twice-weekly R.M.S. passenger bus which takes about five hours between Umtali and Melssetter.

A private daily passenger bus service runs between Melssetter and Chipinga, and regular African passenger buses ply between Ngorima, Melssetter and Umtali. For some years landing grounds for light aircraft have been in regular use on Cambridge and Sawyerombi.

The South African General Mission changed its name to the African Evangelical Fellowship, and many missionaries over the years have made their contribution at Rusitu and the expansion has been great. There is a hospital with considerable medical work being done, a Secondary School with boarding accommodation, comfortable staff houses, and a Book Store and Post Office. At the Bible Institute men and women are receiving training to enable them to evangelise and teach their own people. In the district there are numerous schools and church centres. Monthly undenominational services are held in the Dutch Reformed Church.

At the School David Wall came as Headmaster in January 1969. After reading some of the material referring to the School in the National Archives Wall said recently that what he had thought were grave impediments were no such thing compared with some of the problems with which earlier Heads of Melssetter School had to contend. The numbers at the School in recent years have fluctuated between 64 and 70, and with closer settlement and better roads the ratio of dayscholars to boarders has increased considerably.

Hopes have been fulfilled that a good hotel, with a good road leading to it, would provide a tourist attraction and today the 2-star Hotel is very well patronised all the year round.

Great things are expected of the Rural Council which has very much wider powers and greater resources than any previous local body. The Council has applied to take over the lease of the 31 acres of the Arboretum in order to ensure that the land remains for all time as Parkland. Topics which have caused anxiety for many years are being resolved: the water supply is being increased on a proper basis, stands and plots have been correctly sorted out and are being taken up, tarring of the streets is expected to start in 1971, and the cemeteries have been taken in hand. The Road programme has been extended, general district improvement is envisaged and E.S.C. electricity is due in Melssetter very shortly.

The vegetation, flora and fauna merit a full account, but as the subjects are too vast for an amateur to write on them short notes only have been compiled from authoritative sources.

The main vegetation types are: Closed Evergreen Forest in small patches mainly in gwashas: Short, Open Grassland mainly at the higher temperate altitudes: Bracken Scrub where the veld indicates good climatic farming conditions; and Woodland, both dense and open.

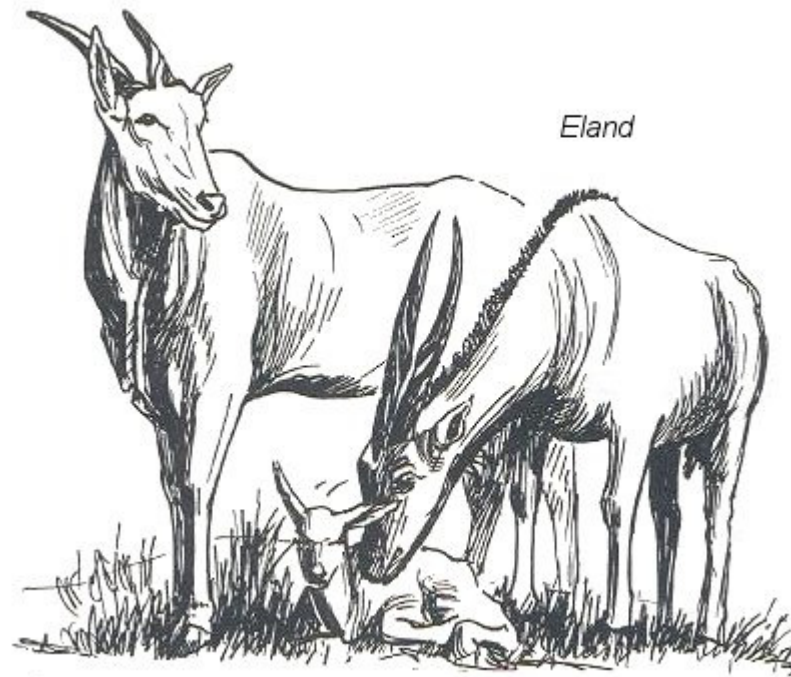
Beautiful and interesting birds are present in abundance. The Prince Edward School Chironi Expeditions in 1965/66 listed 400 collected, of which three had not previously been recorded in Rhodesia: a Bokmakierie, an East African Least Honey-guide, and a Bronze-naped Pigeon. Other treasures are the Angola Pitta, Gurney's Sugarbird, and the Narina Trogon.

A few of the flowers are the Pincushion found in the Chimanimanis and many other Proteas throughout the district, Disas and other lovely orchids, Ericas, fields of redhot pokers, everlastings, purple Dissotis, Dierama, cassias, a quantity of gladioli, Gloriosa superba from clear yellow to deep maroon, lobelias from the tiniest weed to the impressive giant Lobelia stricklandae, and aloes in great variety including two which were originally known as A. Chimanimanensis and A. Melssetterensis, but which have both since been reclassified as A. Swynnertonii.

Indigenous trees are many, varied and interesting. Butterflies, snakes, fish, small mammals and grasses are available in profusion.

Swynnerton's work in the natural history field in the Eastern Districts was published many years ago in the Journal of the Linnean Society. Conservation officers, botanical research teams, and Natural History expeditions have made many studies in the area, and specimens from Melssetter may be seen in Rhodesia's National Collections.

Some of the Fauna have been met in previous pages, but mention should be made of the flash of a duiker across the road, the cry of nightjars round homesteads, and children's delight at hares running in the headlights of home-travelling cars. The eland have always been a delight to see although complaints about the damage done to crops have been very real, and recently they have shown that they are very partial to the bark of Patula pines which has caused concern to the Forestry companies.



An Eland Sanctuary is now being created in order to save a part at least of the herd: over 2 000 acres of Commonage land have been granted for the purpose by Local Government to National Parks and Wild Life, an appeal for funds for the erection of the fence has been successfully launched, and it is hoped that the project will soon be in operation.

To those who have stayed with me to the end I say thank you for your tenacity and I hope you have found enough of interest to repay your patience. I say goodbye to you but not to Melsetter, so rich in potential, so often frustrating, sometimes punishing but always full of joy and promise. Those who know her go on looking for the pot of gold at the foot of the Melsetter Rainbow, and where could one travel more hopefully?

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Shirley Sinclair, a daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Simpson Wells, was born in Cape Town and educated at Rustenburg Girls' High School and Cape Town University. After getting her B.A. degree she studied at Grenoble University and in Munich and also gained a diploma at St. James' Secretarial College in London. She returned to Cape Town to be secretary to the Editor of the Cape Times. In 1937 she married Pat Sinclair and moved to Melsetter, where on the farm Albany their family of two sons and two daughters grew up.

She has been a keen participant in Melsetter's affairs, with a particularly active part in the W.I. She has been a member of the School Council for over 21 years. On a wider scale she has served on the Regional Education Advisory Board.

Her close touch with Melsetter and its people over thirty-four years and her interest in its past has inspired in her a desire to record the smaller and more human items of history of this early settlement of Rhodesia.

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